



# PELHAM AND HIS FRIEND TIM

ALLEN FRENCH



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# Pelham and his Friend Tim







“ ‘Give me that boy!’ demanded McCook. ‘Give me him, I say!’ ”

FRONTISPIECE. See p. 74.

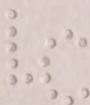
# Pelham

## And his Friend Tim

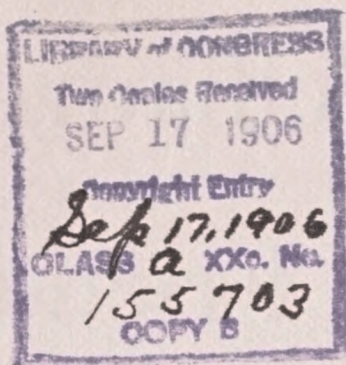
By  
Allen French

Author of "The Story of Rolf and the Viking's Bow,"  
"The Reform of Shaun," "Heroes of  
Iceland," etc.

Illustrated by Ch. Grunwald



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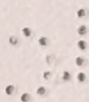


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*To my Sister*



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# Pelham

## and His Friend Tim

### CHAPTER I

#### HARE AND HOUNDS

UPON a hillside lay two panting boys, keen-eyed, alert. The one was dressed well, and the other poorly; the first was fair-haired, and the second dark. But rich lad and poor lay close beside each other in the same covert, a clump of little spruce, and studied the scene before them.

On the plain below, two miles away, a village was spread out, and basked in sunshine. The hills enclosed it in a circle of dark green, which contrasted beautifully with the lighter colors of the cultivated fields. Here and there in the surrounding woods appeared open pastures, dotted with cattle; and the trees of the hills seemed repeated in the village, by the

elms that towered above the houses. But the boys were unconscious of the beauty of the scene.

They were not studying nature, nor yet man's works. Boy-life was what their eyes, roving along the hillsides below them, sought, but sought at first without success.

"They can't have come yet," said the dark one, quietly.

"Oh, Tim, do you think we've puzzled them?" the other cried. "Those were awfully good doubles we made, and bad going that we gave 'em. We're so little and they're so big, I'm scared to death they'll catch us, and I do so want to beat! Where do you s'pose they are?"

"Don't talk, but get your breath," said the other, sagely. "Look!" and he pointed down below, to a spot a half-mile away.

There, emerging from the woods into a pasture, was a line of boys, each one perfectly distinct to those who watched. "Arthur first," the dark lad counted. "Lawrence close be-

hind. Duck Lanigan, Biff Spots — Wally — and Curly, all over mud!”

“That came from the alder swamp,” said the fair-haired lad, glancing at his companion’s leg. “I thought I’d lost you, Tim, when you got in so deep.”

“Only up to my knee,” said Tim. “I did n’t delay you half a minute, Pelly.”

“You scared me just the same,” answered Pelly, whose real name was Pelham. “I don’t see many more of them coming.”

The line of boys in the distant pasture had lengthened very slowly, and the first few of them had now reached, in their dog-trot, the other side of the pasture, and were disappearing in the woods, while the last of them were straggling into sight. Though seen across such a distance, it was yet possible to make out that those who came last had met with difficulties. One, as he ran, was holding together a torn shirt; another limped; a third had his handkerchief bound round his ankle, — “the brier patch,” chuckled Pelly — and

the last carried in his hand what appeared to be a shoe. Even as they looked he stopped, turned, and began to walk toward the town.

“Jack’s out of it,” said Tim. “But where are the rest?”

“There they are!” cried Pelly, and pointed in quite another direction.

A cheerless procession showed in one of the lower fields which bordered the town; six boys, in a spiritless group, were trudging homeward. One, too fat, was winded and exhausted, but cheerful; the others showed dejection in every line of their bodies, and one even appeared to be crying. His aspect was absurd; rushing recklessly at the alder swamp, he had fallen flat; the boy who followed, having no time either to stop or turn, had used the fallen as a stepping-stone, but while leaping clear, had thrust the unfortunate deeper in. It was the injustice of the calamity, rather than the misfortune itself, which had made the stumbler leave the chase and fill the air with lamenta-

tions which all but reached the ears of the watchers on the hillside.

“I can see him bawl, even if I can’t hear him,” said Pelly.

But Tim, after one glance at the disconsolate group, had been studying the situation with the air of a general. “Eight left in the chase,” he said, “and now they’re out of sight. If you’ve got your breath, we can start on again.”

The other looked at him keenly, daringly. “Will you try the big double? It’s our only chance.”

For the two knew well that their pursuers could outrun them. Tim and Pelham were the two smallest of all the boys that played together, and they had no hope to win this chase except by skill. They had between them the two qualities of coolness and daring, a combination usually hard to beat. Tim rose from his place.

“Got your breath?” he demanded. Pelham nodded. “Then how is your bag of scent?”

Four scent-bags lay there on the ground; two were stuffed with bits of paper, but the others were nearly empty, and the lads looked into them dubiously.

“ Shall we go as far as these will take us? ” asked Pelham. “ We ought to get back.”

“ But if we don't we're caught.”

“ And if we do we win.”

“ Come on, then! ”

And so at once they started. They left the two full scent-bags lying where they were, and ran up the hill, casting the paper freely as they went. Into the woods they ran, choosing the bristliest thickets and the closest undergrowth, however hard these were to pass, knowing that the older boys would find them harder still. There was one particular growth of sapling pine into which they plunged with the instinct of woodsmen, where trees grew so thick that a man would have had hard work to push through, and where branches stuck out so stiffly that the eyes had to be guarded. Through this the lads twisted



"Into the woods they ran, choosing the bristliest thickets." *Page 6.*



like ferrets, slipping quickly out on the other side, leaving a slender trail; then they crossed a blueberry patch, disdaining the cows' paths, and scattering the paper between the bushes, where it would be hard to see. Then at last they came to a great patch of mountain laurel, enormous in extent, where the sticky bushes grew higher than a man's head and thicker even than the pines. There they cast their last paper, and with their empty bags came quickly out, to plunge downhill again on their trail, in a hot race for their former hiding-place. They had no need to look for paper as they ran, but unerringly followed back on their track to where the clump of spruce grew, not far from the edge of a ravine. At the spruces the trail ran thickest of all; no one following would suspect a "double" there, and for a moment, thinking themselves secure, the boys stood in a kind of breathless anticipation of triumph.

"Safe — so far!" panted Pelly.

But Tim grasped his arm. "Down!" And the two threw themselves flat.

On the hillside below them was the first of the pursuers, who had so suddenly emerged from the thicket that he all but caught his prey napping. He stopped his run, looked along the trail, looked back, and cast a roving glance up along the hillside. The two boys were partially concealed by the grasses, but as Pelham looked through them he knew not how much of himself was visible, nor if the trail at that point showed to the lad below — but he did know well how keen was the sight of the pursuer, his own brother. Tim pressed his head close to the earth, but with irrepressible curiosity Pelham still looked, and waited, it seemed to him, a full minute, while his brother, drawing full breaths, studied the open ground. Then a second lad came from the bushes, and the two, at a jog, crossed the opening and again disappeared in the bushes.

“We must have been slow,” said Tim.

“No, they were fast,” said Pelham, briefly.

The older boys indeed had been going fast. When the two smallest had been allowed to

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take their turn as hares, the elder ones expected an easy victory. It was only when, after struggling over the roughest going in the neighborhood, the older lads still caught no glimpse of their objects, that they began to realize the skill of the younger ones in taking advantage of size and lightness. It was harder for the taller ones to duck under low branches or to slip through vines, and it was more difficult still to cross the quaking swamp, where Tim, indeed, wet one foot, but where not one of the pursuers got over dry-shod; where the first to cross had to stop and help the others; whence Hop Cudahy turned back with howls; and where all the laggards felt their spirits fail. It was a long, hard pull along the hill-sides, too, for the footing was either slippery with pine needles or troublesome among rocks. The older lads realized at last that they had a genuine task before them, and roused themselves to accomplish it. Therefore they reached the second open space sooner than they were expected.

As Tim and Pelham watched, another and another boy appeared below them, crossing the open ground, until the last had gone. Then, with an immense sigh of relief, Pelham reached out and drew to him his full bag of scent.

“If these bags had n’t looked like stones,” he said, “we’d be goners, sure. Now, can we wait a bit more? I’m all winded.”

“They’ll be here in two minutes,” answered Tim. “Come on, now.”

Still breathing hard, they started through the spruces, laying a thin trail away from the main one, and leading it where it would best be concealed, but always toward the ravine. They left the thicket and crossed an open space, where luckily the grass was tall and hid the scent. Then below them opened the ravine, and they sprang down its slope with relief. They went as silently as possible; they caught at bushes, held by trees, and leaped from rock to rock. The lower they went the louder rose the sound of the brook, and they took less pains. Here the brake grew thickly,

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and within it Pelham scattered the paper, for concealment. Then they reached the brook itself, but instead of crossing they stepped into the cold water. Dropping their paper into the brook, they turned up stream, while the scent floated down.

Then a shout from above made them pause, and they stood to listen, with a sudden fear that the big boys had discovered their trick and would be after them. Five seconds, ten seconds, of painful waiting; then they heard the shout from farther away, and knowing that they were safe, realized that they had been standing shin-deep in cold water.

“Come on,” said Pelham, and up the stream they waded.

But the rocks were slippery, the stream was swift, and they had not gone forty yards before a little cascade stopped them. Wet to their knees, they climbed out on the farther side and began to mount the hill again, once more taking pains to leave the trail, although distinct, so thin as not to be seen from any

distance. Up, up they went, diagonally along the steep slope, until at the top they were breathless again. There they were forced to pause, and listened through their gasping for the voices of their pursuers. But not a sound was heard from across the ravine, and in a few moments they pulled themselves together.

“We’ve fooled ’em!” panted Pelly. “That’s — the longest double — of the summer. It’ll take ’em a while to pick up — the main trail.”

“Come on,” answered Tim, more careful of his breath.

## CHAPTER II

“A NICE BROTHER!”

**S**TILL through the woods they went, Pelham always a foot or two in the lead, with Tim pounding doggedly at his shoulder. Pelham ran with his head high, looking all about him; while Tim held his head low, his eyes on the path he meant to take. They were great ramblers, those two, and knew the woods far better than did their pursuers. Sometimes Pelham cast the scent, sometimes Tim; but except for the words, “Your turn now,” they saved their breath for the business of running. Still mindful of the fact that the older boys could run faster on the level, they took every advantage of the ground, cast the scent in fern or bushes as they brushed through, or ran where they knew the wind would drift the paper to rougher ground.

As they jogged on, suddenly Tim caught his stocking in a thorn, which, before he could stop, stripped it down almost to his ankle. An instant's pause and the stocking was in place again, but Pelham had seen that Tim's leg was all bruised and discolored.

"What hurt you?" he cried.

"Rip," was the answer.

"How?" asked Pelham.

"Kicking my shins."

"And what for?"

"Because I didn't black his boots well enough. They were wet."

Pelham ran on, though his face flushed deeper from his thoughts than from exertion. At length he said, as if not trusting himself to say more: —

"A nice brother!"

"Oh, that's nothing," answered Tim, and they jogged on without more words.

Next, as they entered a little clearing, they saw before them a man stooping at the foot of a tree; his back was toward them, and he was

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working vigorously. Pelham pointed him out to Tim. "Nate digging roots for his dyeing," he said. "Let's make him jump."

"Make Nate jump!" retorted Tim.

Yet they ran toward him as silently as they could. While they were still fifty yards away, running upon moss, he turned, saw them, and bent again over his work. They passed close to him and threw their bits of paper upon him, but he did not look up.

"Hullo, boys!" he grunted.

"Hullo, Nate!" they answered, and kept on.

Their bags were half empty now, but the boys were nearing the town. They began to cross cultivated fields, and then for a while they ran upon a road. Then they struck into a patch of woods, crossed a cornfield, and came again upon the brook which they had earlier crossed. But now the stream was broad and deep, a little river, and they went along it, casting longing eyes about for means of crossing, yet knowing that there was no way across,

or only one, before they came to the bridge a mile away.

There was, to be sure, a chance for a last trick, carefully studied and much discussed, but rejected each time they had talked it over. And yet there was need of it, for though up to now their tricks had been clever and baffling, on straight stretches of the run the bigger boys had gained steadily, and were not at any time to be thrown entirely off the scent. The younger ones had never hoped for that; they knew Pelham's brother too well, and Lawrence Blair, and even Duck Lanigan, not to be sure that by perseverance and skill they would be able to work out even the smaller ones' best "double," which was the longest, and (as the big boys later acknowledged) the cleverest of all that had been made that summer. That pine scrub, and that laurel thicket, and after that the beginning of the new trail itself — well, it was nearly ten minutes after the little boys plunged into the ravine before the pursuers followed. But the trick at the brook had been "easy,"

and from that time the hounds, though they never once had their prey in sight, had been coming up on the hares rapidly.

Pelham knew it. That was why, as they ran along the straight stream, he cast daring glances at the water, wishing that he might venture its passage. But that was against all rules, both of parents and of boys themselves, since the stream was swifter and deeper than it looked; and while a good swimmer could cross easily, another, too ambitious, or overheated with the run, might have a serious mishap. Therefore in the paper chases all swimming was barred, and the boys always played fair. Yet Pelham knew, as he rehearsed these reasons to himself, that from this point the running was all on level ground, so open that any delay for tricks might give his pursuers sight of him. Therefore his longing glance was transferred to a great clump of willows which rose in front, drooping over the stream.

But Tim, also looking ahead, saw with a

start what Pelham overlooked: two young fellows who came toward them, along the bank of the stream. The path was narrow, and they were sure to meet, but Tim had no desire to encounter his brother Rip, who had so marked his shins. The time was late Saturday afternoon, and the two young men were just out from their work at the mill, but not for the purpose of admiring nature. "Fun," as they said, or mischief, as others might put it, was their object. A minute, and the four were close together. Pelly, with his ambitious eye still on his willow-tree, would have passed without noticing who the strollers were, and Tim cast his eyes upon the ground. But they were not allowed to pass.

"Hold on there!" cried Rip.

Pelly's attention came suddenly to nearer things when he felt a hand clutching his shoulder. He stopped, but shook the hand off angrily.

"Keep your hands off me, Rip McCook!" he cried.

But Rip, with a mocking light in his eye, blocked the path. “ Where are you goin’ ? ” he demanded.

He was loosely built and loosely dressed, and even his eyes seemed loose in his head as he looked from one to the other of the boys. His face was weak, but strong for mischief; no match in body for others of his age, he yet was ready to bully boys younger than himself. The one who was with him seemed an echo of him, — weaker yet, even in desire for ill.

“ We’re playing hare and hounds,” said Pelham, hotly. “ You can see that well enough, and you too, Johnny Bragin. Let us go by.”

But the stream was on one side, a fence upon the other, and Rip could easily bar the way, as he did. “ Oh, don’t hurry,” he said.

Johnny Bragin laughed uneasily.

They all knew that Pelham had a weapon which he could use — the threat of complaint to his father, who employed Rip, and in fact employed almost every workman in the village, in his mills. But they also knew that that was

a threat which Pelham would not use; it was not in his code of fair play. Yet it exasperated him that Rip should so take advantage of him. He was only twelve years old, and Rip was twenty; he stood not quite so high as Rip's shoulder. But Pelham advanced fearlessly.

"If you spoil this run you'll hear from all of us," he said. "Now stand out of the way!"

Rip, himself a thorough jackal, understood what meant the threat of a pack of young lions at his heels. He snarled, but stood aside.

"You're awful smart," was all he could think to say. Pelham answered only by a glance of contempt, and as Johnny Bragin also stepped out of the path, the boy sprang forward at full speed. Tim started to follow, but Pelham's contempt had stung Rip, and he took his small revenge. He thrust out his foot and sent Tim sprawling.

Pelham heard the thump, stopped, and looked back. There lay Tim quiet on the

path; he seemed unable to move. Rip stood over him, smiling — sneering, rather. All Pelly's blood boiled at the trick, and he dashed at the bully.

Pelham was an electric boy, sudden, silent in attack, and in the moment of his enthusiasms irresistible by forces, whether mental or physical, stronger than his own. Before Rip knew it Pelly was beside him, leg crooked to leg, arms around the lank waist. Rip scarcely felt the clasp before all Pelly's strength was thrown into the heave. Startled at the assault, Rip could not gather himself to resist before it was too late. His balance gone, the leg behind his prevented recovery, and neatly back-heeled, he fell toward the stream. His legs remained upon the shore, but waist, shoulders, and head splashed into the water. Pelly saw his frightened eyes, noticed his mouth gasping with the shock of the cold; then the water filled both eyes and mouth, and Rip went under.

Johnny Bragin seized his feet, and Pelly

turned to Tim, who was scrambling up.  
“Hurt?”

“Only shaken up.”

“Come on, then.”

Yet for an instant they paused to watch the struggle between Rip's legs and Johnny Bragin. Johnny was so alarmed that he could not pull his companion out; he merely held to the legs, while his pale blue eyes stared in doubt at the two little boys. The bank shelved quickly there, and Rip's head and body were completely out of sight; only his hands protruded, vainly clutching.

“I've got him,” said Johnny, dubiously.

But Pelly rushed at him. “You're drowning him,” he cried. “Let go, or pull him out!”

Johnny let go, and at once Rip's head appeared above water. His hands reached up and grasped a bush, and the breath which he had successfully been holding came out with a puff. He glared at Johnny until he could speak.

"You idiot!" he spluttered. Then his eyes turned on Pelly, as a greater subject for wrath, and looked unutterable threats.

"Good-bye, Rip," said Pelly; and as Rip began to struggle up the bank the two smaller boys ran on. It would be something to chuckle over later, but was too serious now.

"All that time lost!" Pelham grumbled.

"They're after us," warned Tim, looking back.

It was true, and Rip and Johnny Bragin, loose-jointed though they were, were not to be despised at middle-distance running.

"Then we'll try the tree!" cried Pelly, and Tim noted the ring of joy in his voice. "Come on!"

It was almost a mile to the bridge, but not fifty yards ahead stood the great willow. Forgetful of everything, Pelham ran for it; but Tim, more cool, put his hand in his bag and scattered the scent as he ran. Pelly reached the great rough trunk, sprang for a limb and caught it, swung himself up, and

was ready to help Tim when he got there. Tim was safe in the tree by the time Rip reached it.

“Now we’ve got you!” called Rip. “We’ll keep you here till the fellers come.”

But the boys paid no attention to him. Climbing higher, they reached a branch that stretched out over the water, and out upon it they went, Tim first, and Pelly close behind.

“Now you’ll get a ducking if you try to drop,” called Rip, supposing that they were afraid of him, and forgetting his dripping clothes. “Look at ’em, Johnny!”

“Look at ’em!” Johnny echoed.

But the boys paid no attention to Rip and Johnny. Pelham was master now; he gave Tim no time to hesitate or to think. The great branch stretched clear across the narrow stream, and drooped well down upon the other side; Pelham knew that those drooping twigs were tough and strong. He urged Tim out upon the branch, and by constant orders, “Don’t look down!” gave him no time to

think of danger. The branch grew smaller as it divided, and at last it began to bend beneath them. Tim clutched convulsively, to save himself.

"Look at 'em!" cried Rip in delight.

"Turn and face this way," ordered Pelham from behind; and Tim obeyed. Pelham turned also.

"Hi!" shouted Johnny Bragin, "they're coming back!" But Pelham simply said: "Now shin down!"

"Where shall I land?" asked Tim.

"You're over the ground," answered Pelham. "Go on!"

They slid lower down the branch, grasping at the twigs to stay their speed. The branch bent lower; they were both upon the same division, when it cracked.

"It's getting mighty small to hold us both," suggested Tim. Pelham swung across to another division of the branch, with an ease at which he suddenly, when he was safe, shuddered, and nearly lost his hold. But he would

not let Tim know his own weakness, and ordered again, "Lower!" Lower they swung, and Pelham looked down confidently to measure the distance.

Then Rip understood, and his glee changed to fury. "Wha'? What?" he gasped. "Oh, I'll lam it into 'em!" And he snatched up a handful of stones.

Zip! and the first stone thrown by Rip cut through the leaves a yard away from Pelly's head. He calmly looked at the big boy as he poised for another throw, and their eyes met. "You don't dare really try to hit me!" Pelly's eyes said, and red blotches of shame and anger came into Rip's unhealthy cheeks. He looked away, set his thin lips with spite, and measured the distance to his brother.

"We're swinging nearer the water," said Tim to Pelly.

"We'll make it, just the same," was the answer. And they kept on.

The second stone from Rip struck Tim on the leg; he winced, but said nothing. "Al-

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most there!" said Pelly between his teeth. "Let me get a stone!" and each boy swung lower still. They were now dangling free, each grasping a handful of twigs, and their feet were not a man's height from the ground. "Ready to drop?" asked Pelly.

"They 'll make it!" yelled Johnny Bragin.

"No, they won't!" snarled Rip.

He threw once more, and with too good an aim. The stone struck against Tim's clenched hand, and Pelly heard the crack of it. Tim's hand unclenched with the shock and pain, and he swung by only the other.

"I must drop!" he called. "Ready?"

But suddenly his grip loosened, and he slipped. The buds tore at his hand, and he could not stop himself. "Drop!" he called; then he lost his grip entirely, and fell. An instant later, Pelham tried to drop.

But the branch, relieved of Tim's weight, was already rising, and spoiled Pelham's attempt. Sprawling, snatching vainly at the twigs, he came down sidewise, struck upon one

foot, and fell half into the river. Tim was upon him instantly, and dragged him out.

“Are you hurt?” demanded Tim.

“Give me that stone!” cried Pelly, furious, and reached for one as he tried to scramble to his feet. Instantly, on the further bank, Rip and Johnny took to flight; but Pelly, as he tried to stand, winced, turned pale, and sat down again. His hand went to his ankle.

“Sprained!” he said.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RUN IN

**T**IM exclaimed in dismay, and the two looked around them helplessly. Crossing by the tree had gained them more than a mile, for the big boys could not possibly trust their weight on the willow. But with Pelly's sprained ankle how could the two use their advantage? Yet Pelham set his teeth.

"Give me your handkerchief," he said, as he drew out his own.

"You must n't try to go on," protested Tim. But he drew out the handkerchief. His was the persistence which made the success of half their enterprises, but the conception of them, and the original headlong speed, was usually Pelly's. Tim was used to accepting the other's propositions, which had saved them more than once at a pinch. Besides, he saw that Pelham was confident.

“Help me to rise,” Pelham said. “Now,” when they stood side by side, “put your foot side of mine — so. Now tie our ankles together.”

“Good!” exclaimed Tim, and bound the ankles securely. Many a time they had practised together in the three-legged race; now their skill was to be tested.

“Tim,” said Pelham, as he stood waiting, “I don’t see my scent-bag anywhere. Did it fall into the river?”

There was nothing else that could have happened to it. “It must have,” answered Tim.

“Well, never mind,” said Pelly. “How’s your hand?”

“Aches; but that’s nothing. I can use it.”

“Come on, then! I’ll lean on you as little as I can.”

They started. It was slow work at first, but soon they went more quickly. Step by step, first on the coupled feet and then on the free ones, they went at a clumsy walk, trying to make it freer and faster. Tim had

his arm around Pelham's waist, Pelham had a hand on Tim's shoulder; it would not have been difficult to go thus, had they not needed to throw out the scent. This occupied their remaining hands, which were really needed in balancing; Pelham held the bag, Tim dipped into it and cast the paper, — if the bag had only been differently made either could have managed it with one hand, but there was no use in regretting that now.

They fell into the swing of it at last, and considering the circumstances their speed was excellent. And yet it was fatiguing to walk thus for any distance; a quarter-mile seemed tremendous, with Pelham's leg hurting him at every step and Tim's back beginning to ache with the weight he was carrying. Reaching a boulder which topped a little rise of the ground, without words they stopped and sat down. Then they looked at each other. The sweat was pouring down their faces.

“Tough,” said Pelly.

“Yep,” answered Tim. Puffing, they looked about them.

Ahead lay the town, with most of its houses clustered around the church, whose spire rose above the trees and roofs. To the right of the town stood the mill, with the workmen’s houses close at hand; and to the left were the houses of the well-to-do, among them, largest of all, Pelham’s own house, their present goal — for if they could but touch one of the gateposts they were safe. It was not far away.

“Oh!” exclaimed Pelham in vexation, “if I could run they’d never catch us now, even if they crossed the brook as we did.”

“They are at the tree now,” said Tim.

In fact, the leaders of the hounds were already at the tree, examining the situation. There was the trail, leading straight to the foot of the tree; across the brook it began again, and led away toward home. “Do you suppose,” demanded one, “that they crossed on that branch?”

“Just like ’em,” grunted Duck Lanigan; and Arthur, Pelham’s brother, nodded confidently. He was as sure that the two youngsters had crossed that way as that he himself could not venture to do so.

“There they are now,” said Lawrence Blair, and pointed to the two younger lads.

“Sitting down and waving their hands!” grumbled Duck. “They take it easy.”

“They know they’ve beaten us,” said Arthur. “They’ve got only a quarter-mile to go, and we’ve a mile more than that.” Then he turned down stream. “Come on, let’s save our law, anyway.”

For five minutes’ start, or “law,” had been given the hares, and the disgrace of defeat would be less to the hounds if they could arrive within that time.

“They’re going round by the bridge,” said Pelham. “Come on, Tim; we must make it!” and they proceeded slowly.

But the scent-bag was nearly empty, and Pelham’s brief confidence vanished. It was

the rule that scent must be cast until the hares had reached certain boundaries which stretched, roughly, within a furlong of the house, and from which, when once reached, hares or hounds could run directly in. Yet the boys had not enough paper to last so far, and it seemed as if, with success so close, they would be caught within sight of home. "But we'll get to the road, anyway," declared Pelham.

They reached the road; it was a task to climb over the fence, but they accomplished it, and stood in the roadway. "How much scent is left?" asked Tim. Pelham shook the bag, but not a single piece of paper fluttered down.

"We may as well sit here and wait," said Tim.

But Pelham looked about him. He would not give in; he would not! The road led almost directly to the house; leaves would do for scent, or grass, or — what was that he saw?

A package of newspapers lay there on the road!

“Quick!” cried Pelham.

They hobbled to the package; Tim picked it up. It was thick and heavy; there was enough paper to take them home.

“Open it,” Pelham directed. “Tear it up!”

As they staggered on, Tim opened the papers and began to tear off little bits. From inside the package a smaller bunch of paper, clippings evidently, fell into the road.

“Give me that!” cried Pelly. He stuffed it into his pocket. “We must n’t waste a bit. Now, as fast as we can!”

But if it had before been hard to cast the scent, it was harder now. Neither lad had two free hands; they had to snatch and tear and drop the papers as best they might. Pelham, as he found himself even using his teeth, began to laugh with the excitement of the struggle. “We’ll do it yet!” he said, and roused tired Tim to greater endeavor.

Slowly they put the yards behind them, but the yards grew to rods, and the rods to a furlong. The paper was almost gone, but the boundary was near, and in a minute more they could walk freely. Then they heard a distant yell, a whoop of exultation behind them.

“They see us,” gasped Tim. “Can you get out those papers from your pocket? We may need them.”

“No, we won’t,” replied Pelly. “Here we are!” The last scrap of paper fell from Tim’s hand. “And now make for the gate!”

It was not far, not so very far, and they called on their reserve of strength. What a relief, what a help, to be able to swing their arms! Faster they went, and faster. “Can you trot?” asked Tim; but Pelham, through his teeth, said, “Not yet.” He was doing all he could. Behind them he knew that the other boys were gaining rapidly, — and yet the gate was so near! His foot hurt more and more, but he did n’t care, he did n’t care! Faster still!

Now came capering to meet them those boys who had turned back at the alder swamp, and had waited at the goal to see the finish of the chase. They yelled encouragement, and the spirits of the hares rose. A little farther, only a little! "You'll make it!" Fatty Benson shouted; but then the hares heard behind them the very steps of their pursuers. "Run!" ordered Pelham. And with that sound in their ears the two lads, tired as they were, actually ran!

Twenty yards more — ten yards! Pelham heard panting at his very back; he knew that a hand was outstretched to grasp his shoulder, he put the remaining ounce of his energy into the last few steps, and collapsed at the foot of the post. He clasped it with his arms, and laughed in spite of pain. He and Tim had won!

The others rushed up and surrounded them, untied the legs, raised both boys from the ground, clapped them on the back, and asked the cause of the accident. There was laugh-

ing and talking all together, till a hoarse voice broke through the babel, — a man's voice.

“Who found my papers in the road, and tore them up?”

Pelham, still supported by Tim, turned to see a bearded face close to his, angry and threatening. “Why, I did n't think —” he was beginning.

“You!” cried the man, and struck him in the face. Pelham reeled a step backward, shrieked with the pain in his ankle, and fell.

Above him Tim stood for a moment horrified, then with a sob of anger he threw himself on the man. In a mass the other boys followed his example. Well had Rip McCook known what a pack of young lions they could be. The man was no match for them; they seized his arms, his legs, his waist, and threw him to the ground. There they piled upon him, and held him helpless.

“Let me go!” he roared, struggling.

Arthur, shaking with anger, poised his fist above the man's face. “Lie still!” he shouted

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in return, "or I'll —" The flash of his eye completed the threat, and the man lay quiet.

"I see your father coming," piped one of the small boys. "Your brother's with him."

"Hold him fast," said Arthur to the others, "and if he's hurt Pelly he'll smart for it."

But Pelham sat up. "I — I'm all right," he said weakly. "Let him go, boys."

"Get away then, quick," was Arthur's command as the boys released the man. "Don't wait till my father comes." The stranger, casting a glance at the approaching figures, rose in haste to his feet and ran away.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MASTER DYER

**W**HEN Mr. Dodd, accompanied by his eldest son, arrived upon the scene, the man who had struck Pelham was gone, and Pelly himself was being lifted to his feet by his friends.

“What ’s all this?” asked Mr. Dodd.

He was a bearded man of middle age, a man kept pale by close application to his work, but affectionate and kindly. Beside him his son Bob, tall and bronzed, looked upon the scene with a twinkle much like his father’s, and listened to the chorussed explanations of the chase with an amused understanding of the ways of boys. But when they heard of the stranger’s blow, Mr. Dodd frowned, and Bob clenched his fist.

“If I had been here!” he cried. Then he turned to Pelly, and with ease lifted him to the crook of his arm.

“Hurt, old fellow?” he asked.

“Nope,” answered Pelly, indifferently, though his heart swelled at the proof of his brother’s affection.

Meanwhile Mr. Dodd had turned to Tim. “You two ran well,” he said warmly. “Will you stay to supper with us, Tim?”

Stay to supper with the Dodds! Tim flushed at the honor, but his pleasure faded at the sight of Pelham on his brother’s arm. “If only I,” thought Tim, “had a brother like that!” And thus reminded, he answered Mr. Dodd that he could not stay, for he must go home.

“I hope your brother will learn to treat you better,” said Mr. Dodd.

Tim said nothing. He had little hope of that.

“If he does n’t,” called Bob, beginning to carry Pelly up the path to the house, “he’ll

get mixed up with me. I think Pelly fell in with two of a kind to-day."

"I think he did," agreed Tim.

"Good-bye, Tim," cried Pelham. "Come and see me to-morrow. I suppose I stay in the house for a day or two."

"A week or two," laughed his brother, and he carried Pelham away entirely. Mr. Dodd followed, his hand on Arthur's shoulder.

With that picture of brotherly affection and paternal kindness before his eyes, Tim turned toward his own home. He went slowly, lingering while the others hastened to their suppers. Not that he was not hungry, for he was. But he enjoyed the friendly feeling among his mates, he liked the praise they gave him for the day's run, and his steps dragged the more at each denunciation of Rip McCook.

They were not pleasant in his ears, for they did him no good. Threats come easily when you do not have to live with their object, but Tim lingered because he knew that on going home he would have to face his brother. His

hand, which in his excitement he had forgotten, began to throb. He found it swollen, and the increasing ache reminded him of many a smart which he had suffered at Rip's hands. He well knew, also, which side his father would take in any question between Rip and himself; and a dread, which was not cowardly, rose in his heart at the thought of the only home he knew. In Tim's mind the memory of the chase died away, the praise of his mates sounded empty, and he saw the picture of himself facing the two grown men.

The last of the boys left him, and he went with dragging feet toward the little street on which he lived. He felt the impulse to turn back, to go to the Dodds, anywhere, if only he could put off this meeting for a while. But he went steadily on. Then a voice hailed him.

“What's wrong with 'ee, lad?”

There on the steps of a cottage stood Waters the dyer, smoking his pipe, and leaning against the door. Tim shook his head, and was going by, but the man went on:

“ In a hurry to have it over with? ”

Tim stopped. He liked this Englishman, who had odd ways of speech, a kindly eye, and a manly face. Waters always wore the little English cap, and smoked a short English pipe, just as if he still lived in “ th’ old country.” In spite of his grizzled hair, he and the boy were good friends.

“ What do you know about it? ” asked Tim.

“ I heerd your feyther and Rip talking about ’ee. You ’ll catch it at home.”

“ It ’s nothing new,” replied Tim, starting on again.

“ Come in here, I tell ’ee!” cried Waters. “ They can’t see, and I ’ve made ready.”

“ What do you mean? ” Tim asked, but he followed the dyer into the house.

Waters lived by himself. He had neither wife nor child, but refusing to lodge at any of the mill-men’s boarding-houses, he rented one of the cottages which Mr. Dodd had built for his workmen, and lived there alone. He was not very intimate with the men of the mills,

who respected him, indeed, but could not get within his reserve. Only the boys ever saw the inside of his house, for he seemed to have a special interest in them; and of them all Tim was his favorite, having even tasted his cooking.

Waters' house was clean and fresh, inside and out. His yard was always neat, he kept a grass-plot where his neighbors had but bare earth, and he grew plants which climbed his porch or flowered beneath his windows. No woman ever crossed his threshold, for he had no need of them, since every bit of his work was done by himself. His own cooking, his own sewing, his own sweeping and dusting, were his pride. Now, as Tim stepped within the door, he felt the full force of the contrast between this place and his own slovenly home.

"Come into the kitchen," said Waters.

There on the table were a plate and a knife, butter, bread, buns, and a glass of milk. In spite of himself Tim's hungry eyes fastened on them at once, and Waters laughed aloud.

“I knew what you’d be wanting,” he said.

“Fall on, then!”

But Tim drew back. “It would n’t be fair,” he said.

“Not fair to take my food when your father will likely give ’ee none?” roared Waters. “Will ’ee go to bed supperless? Fall on, I say!”

“I can’t,” answered Tim.

“Pooh!” said Waters, and strode back into his front room. Tim followed timidly. He could not really explain why he refused the food, except that he thought his father would wish to send him to bed hungry; in which case, hungry to bed he ought to go.

“You’re not cross with me?” he asked.

“No,” answered Waters, gruffly.

“What is it, then?” Tim persisted.

“I’m proud of ’ee,” said Waters, fiercely.

“That’s what. Heaven knows your father does n’t deserve a son like you — and Heaven pardon me for speaking against your own flesh and blood. Go home, lad, and take your

punishment like a man, whatever you 've done, and if your father lays it on too hard, tell me, and I 'll thrash him in his own house!"

"Good-bye," said Tim, suddenly much moved, and turning toward the door. Why could every one be kind to him but his own?

"Stay," commanded Waters. "Wipe your eyes, and don't meet your father with a tear on your cheek. And tell me, too, why I have n't see you much lately."

"I 've been sawing wood," explained Tim. "Father bought a couple of cords."

"He saws none of it, I 'll be bound," rapped out Waters. "No, nor Rip either. Precious pair! — But there 's something more between ye all, I 'm thinkin'?"

"Yes," said Tim. "I 'm twelve years old to-morrow."

"Well?"

"And father wants me to go into the mill."

There was silence for a moment, while Waters gazed at the lad. Though the man's hair was grizzled, his eyebrows were still black,

and now they drew together into a frown. As he studied the sturdy boy, who looked at him frankly, almost appealingly, his heart stirred within him. Then he burst out.

“Go into the mill? *You* go into the mill? You grow thin that be so strong, and you grow pale for lack of sun and breathing cotton dust? That never should be in this world!”

Tim drew a long breath. “I’m glad you think so, Mr. Waters!” he cried with relief.

“What’s your feyther thinkin’ of?” demanded Waters. “What need for you to go to the mill? Two can support two.”

“He says two is one too many to be idle at home, and if Bridget were stronger he’d send her too.”

“Aye, and he’d set a babe from the cradle to work for him!” cried Waters. “The greed of the man! And you idle at home, he says? Bridget too? When no lad of your age works as hard as you, and Bridget fair sick with his bullying, and only that. — But I’ll not belittle your father before your face. Only

promise me this, not to go into the mill, not for two years more."

"And then I'll be a dyer!" cried Tim.

Waters' face glowed. "Good for thee!" he cried. "Dyeing is the only trade. Leave common men to run mules and looms, but do 'ee come to me in two years' time, and I'll teach 'ee all of the dyer's art. There's not a thing I know but I'll teach it thee!"

"Oh, Mr. Waters!" cried Tim. And they struck hands on it as if they both were men.

Then Tim went home. With the new courage from his friend's support, he went to face the old struggle, which he had borne now for months — the struggle, against two men, of a boy fighting for the right to live his own life, to be himself.

Waters watched him go. "My boy would have been just about his age," he murmured to himself. "If only I had him now — such a boy as that!"

## CHAPTER V

### THE FAMILY OF McCOOK

**T**IM arrived at his own house. It was the slovenliest dwelling in the town. In place of grass, weeds grew about the house; a boot lay here, a pile of tin cans there; a barrel, collapsed, graced the nearer view, and at the further fence a line of shabby washing fluttered in the breeze. A scrawny girl, who was just beginning to take in the clothes, wrung her hands at the sight of Tim, and hastened toward him, making a gesture of caution.

“Oh, Tim!” she whispered loudly, as soon as she got near; “they’re waiting for you inside.”

“At supper?” Tim asked.

She nodded. Her face was pale and anxious, an uneasy and plaintive face, suggestive of a

dog who, living with a hard-tempered master, never knows for a minute the feeling of security. Poor Bridget was conscientious and hard-working, but it was fear and not work which made her thin. "Don't go in!" she begged. "I'm afraid of what they'll do to you."

"Nothing worse than before," answered Tim, with a foot on the step.

"Oh, don't go!" she repeated.

A harsh voice sounded from the open window of the house. "Bridget, butter!"

"Yes, sir," she answered hastily, and ran to the back of the house, to enter by the rear door. Tim, still brave but feeling very hollow, went in by the front, hung his hat in the hall, and walked into the kitchen. There at the table sat McCook and Rip, facing each other, silent and busy, knife in hand. Rip faced the door, and as he saw the boy a light leaped into his sullen eyes. At the sound of Tim's entrance, the elder McCook turned slowly in his chair.

"So there you are at last!" he said, in the

harsh voice which had so startled Bridget. McCook was a tall, lean man, with a frowning brow and a small chin.

“I’m sorry to be late, father,” answered Tim. Not intending to provoke the storm by the appearance of dreading it, he took his seat at the table, passed to his father the plate of butter which Bridget just then set upon the table, and helped himself to the bread. But the bread was instantly snatched from his hand.

“What,” cried his father, throwing it back upon the plate, “will you expect to have supper after what you’ve done?”

Tim sighed drearily — again no supper! How many times did he go empty to bed for the least fault? Then with quiet acceptance of his father’s injustice he rose to his feet. “Shall I go to my room?” he asked.

“Listen to him,” sneered his father, exasperated more by Tim’s manner than he would have been by tears. For the true bully the greatest pleasure is to rule another’s soul, but

neither of the McCooks ever felt that, slight as was the physical resistance which Tim could offer them, they could master his spirit. Often as they tried, he never flinched — yet they were always trying.

“No, you ’ll not go to bed,” said McCook. “Stand there, and we ’ll settle the question we ’ve so long fooled with, whether or not you ’ll go to work. A fine useful boy you are to me, running all over the country, and knocking your brother into the water.”

“Pelham threw him down all by himself,” stated Tim.

McCook looked at his elder son. “You told me both of them did it.”

“They did!” asserted Rip, his sallow cheek becoming red. “Tim pushed me, and Pelly tripped me. Do you suppose either of them could put me down alone?”

“Well,” went on McCook, turning again to Tim, and leaving the subject, into which he saw it would not be wise to inquire farther — for passionate and prejudiced as he was, he

knew well enough which of his sons always told the truth. "Well, you were trapesing off with the other boys, anyway."

"I did my day's work first," reminded Tim, "— forty sticks of wood."

And that had been a hard morning's work. Forty cord-wood sticks, of green oak, each sawed three times, with a dull saw, on a saw-horse too tall for the boy. It was not until one o'clock that, with only a light lunch, he had felt free to go for his pleasure with the other boys. Not one of them had worked so hard that day as he, or was so hungry at evening. Yet even with the sight of food before him he stood there and answered his tormentors with unshaken courage.

"Just the same," said McCook, "I wanted you at home."

"On Saturday afternoon everybody's off!" cried Tim. "You and Rip had no work yourselves."

"Stop excusin' yourself!" cried his father, stung by Tim's reasoning, "and tell me how

soon you 'll go to work and earn your own living."

"I chop the wood and saw it," replied Tim; "I run all the errands; I clean your boots, and Rip's. In school-hours I can't work for you; out of school I'm busy most of the time, and now in vacation I pick berries and give you the money."

"Think you do a good deal, don't you?" sneered Rip.

Tim would not answer, out of very disdain of him. Rip scowled and snarled at the boy's lofty carriage, and McCook grew angry. They would have been ashamed, could they have but realized the contrast they made with the splendid boy standing there. Not a feature of them was the same. Rip and his father were lean and sandy-haired, thin-lipped, and narrow-eyed. Their shoulders sloped and their chests were flat — typical mill-workers were they in their bodies, and in their minds they were men of low stamp, selfish, and cowardly. Compared with them Tim shone. He was

heavier built, straight-backed, and square-chested. His hair was dark, his cheeks full and red, and his blue eyes looked on the pale gray eyes of the others with a far steadier glance. In no two particulars were they alike, and it scarcely seemed as if they were of the same blood. The men's glances actually shifted before his, as he met them squarely; but he saw that his father was preparing to use force, and as he heard Bridget whimpering in the next room, his heart beat faster, and his head suddenly felt light and dizzy.

"Bridget," shouted McCook, "shut that door and stop your noise. — Now, Tim, understand! You're going to work in the mill."

"You promised mother I should n't!" Tim cried.

"I don't care," was the answer. "On Monday morning I take you to the mill, and Mr. Dodd will set you to work."

"He'll ask me first," answered Tim, "whether I want to work. He asks that of every boy that's not fourteen."



“Tim reeled back against the wall, pressing his hand to his lip.” *Page 57.*



“Let him ask,” said McCook. “It’s easy enough to say Yes.”

“He’ll know I don’t want to work, because Pelly knows.”

“So you’ve been blabbing?” demanded McCook. “Then you don’t go with those Dodd boys any more.”

Tim’s heart sank. He knew that his father could keep him away from Pelham, whom he loved better than himself. It was the worst threat that McCook could make, but in his anger he did not see the telltale dismay on Tim’s face. “Understand,” commanded McCook, “when Mr. Dodd asks you if you want to work, you say Yes!”

“I’ll say No!” replied Tim.

In an instant his father, starting from his chair, had — oh, cruel, cruel! — struck him on the mouth. Tim reeled back against the wall, pressing his hand to his lip, whence blood was flowing.

“That’ll show you!” roared McCook, his eyes flashing fiercely. “If on Monday you

don't go to the mill and take your work quietly, I 'll thrash you so you 'll never forget it."

Tim, indomitable, spoke through swollen lips. "I won't go into the mill. I 'll never work at spinning or weaving. But in two years I 'll go into the dye-rooms, and earn better wages than if I go to work now."

"The dye-rooms! You?" sneered McCook. "Only the picked boys go there. And shall I support your lazy body for two more years? Go to the shed, confound you, and split tomorrow's wood!"

"And black my shoes!" ordered Rip, starting from his chair to point an exultant finger at the lad. "You said you could n't black wet shoes, but you can try again."

Tim turned and went out into the woodshed, where he had piled the wood which in the morning he had sawed. Plenty of it lay there split and ready for the fire; to ask him to split more was merely punishment. And there were Rip's boots, muddy and still damp from their bath in the river. While Tim stood looking at

them he heard some one come to the rear door of the shed and secure it by propping a stick of wood against it. He was shut in!

Suddenly his whole soul rose up in arms against such treatment. He knew there were such things as kindness, affection, gentleness in the world, for he had seen them in his friends. He knew he did not merit this harshness. No, he would not work in the mill, to give up all that was good in his life and gain no better treatment. Had his father, had any father, the right to treat a son like this?

In revolt, Tim strode to the bench where stood the boots, seized them, and flung them in the corner. He sat down in their place and remained there, brooding. Darkness began to gather, and his father called at the door: "Have you chopped any wood?"

Tim made no answer.

"You 'll stay there all night unless you do," said McCook, "and it 'll soon be too dark to begin."

He went away, but Tim sat still, and after

a while Rip came to the door. "Have you blacked my boots?"

Again Tim made no answer, and Rip added: "Sleep on the woodpile, then, but be sure you have the boots ready in the morning."

Darkness came completely. Through the window Tim saw the stars, and heard his mates shouting in the streets. The time passed on; he heard the town clock strike eight, and the sounds of the boys' voices diminished. Nine o'clock, and still Tim sat there, rebellious and unyielding. Then he heard his father locking up the house. He came to the shed door, locked it, and went away. Biddy's step came near, and she called softly:

"Good-night, Tim."

"Let him alone!" ordered his father from a distance, but Tim answered her good-night. Then they went upstairs, and the house was silent.

Tim sat for a long while yet, with his elbows on his knees, his chin on his hands, and frowning into the darkness. He did not know what

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would happen to him, and he could not see his way clear, but he told himself, over and over again, that he would not yield. Then at last he sat upright, leaned against the wall, and slept.

In the middle of the night he waked suddenly. The moon was shining in at the window upon his face, but that had not wakened him. He listened, and heard a sound within the house: some one was coming down the stairs. A board creaked nearer, and then he heard a soft patter of feet toward his own door. It stopped, and he heard a rustling.

## CHAPTER VI

### MRS. McCOOK'S LETTER

“**B**IDDY!” Tim called cautiously.

There was no answer. The footsteps retreated, climbed the stairs again, and he heard nothing more.

“It was Biddy!” he told himself.

He slept again, to wake again at last from a dream of his mother. So real was it that he even heard her voice in his ears after he woke: “I’ll help you, Tim, my lad!” He even thought he saw her face fading away, and stared a long time at the same place, half expecting her return. Then he thought with regret of her.

If she were alive she would help him. A thin, worn, bullied woman, she yet had courage to stand between Tim and the other two; and she sympathized, even as Bridget still did, with

his troubles. She had died more than a year ago, and with her last words she had recommended Tim and Biddy to McCook's and Rip's care. Well had they fulfilled her trust!

He came to himself with a start, and looked about him. It was daylight; his father would soon be there. The town clock struck, and reassured him: it was only five o'clock. He rose to his feet, stretched himself from the cramped position on the bench, and his eye fell on something white which lay on the threshold. Going nearer, he saw it was a letter.

That was why Biddy had come downstairs in the night. Tim picked the letter up, wondering why she should write. But when he looked closer, he saw that the writing was his mother's.

"For Bridget to give to Tim," the address read, "on his twelfth birthday, if McCook tries to send him to work at the mill."

Tim stared at it. Mrs. McCook had been better educated than her husband, and the writing was clear. Where she wrote "McCook" she had first written "his father," but

had crossed it out. That was odd, he thought. But he was most interested that a letter should come with such an inscription, as if she had foreseen that McCook's promise would be broken. Eagerly he opened the letter, and began to read.

"Dear Tim," it read. "There is only one way to make sure that you don't work early in the mill, in case my husband means to break his promise, and that is to write you this. Over and over he has told me that he'll keep you at school till you are fourteen, but I don't feel sure of him, and I can't have you ruined by too early work, if there's no need.

"He has not even a father's right, or an adopted father's, for you are no son of ours. When my second boy died, there was a woman died in our tenement, and she left a boy just my baby's age, one year. I thought I should die without a baby to love, and I took the boy, — it was you, — and we brought you up, and gave you my boy's name, and his birthday, though I never could get my husband to adopt

you. He and Rip have always had a spite against you, because I liked you best, and I've always had to stand between you and work that was too hard for you.

"Tell your father that he owes you kindness, if only for the hard life that he led me. I could not help loving you best, for you loved me. I don't know what you can do if McCook keeps on being unkind, except to leave him, and that would be hard on Biddy, but perhaps you will have to do it.

"Don't show your father this letter, for he would tear it up. Sons are valuable when they bring in five dollars a week. But show the letter to Mr. Dodd or James Waters, and they can look up the proof of what I say.

"God bless you. You have been a good son to me, better than the one that ought to love me best."

Tim stood bewildered, staring at the letter. Not McCook's son! Then whose son was he? What was his name? Where was he to turn, and on whom had he a claim for help? Badly

as the McCooks had treated him, this place, even this woodshed, stood for home, and when without warning he was thus suddenly cut off from them, in his mind dismay struggled with relief.

Then he heard a sound, and there stood Bridget at the door. With her finger she motioned him to be silent, and shut it quietly behind her. She tiptoed toward him. "I saw where father put the key," she said.

"Oh, Biddy!" and Tim held out the letter toward her. "You know what this says?"

"Yes," she answered; "and sorry I was to have to give it to you."

"I'm not your brother?"

"No," replied she. "Lucky for you you're not."

"Then what shall I do?" he cried.

"I came to say I think you'd best be going, Tim," she said. "Father will be awake before long, and then there'll be nothing but trouble for you. There's no good in your staying."

"But what about you?" he asked.

“ I shall miss you enough,” she replied, smiling sadly. “ But it ’s no great fun for me to see you bullied so.” She pointed to the door. “ Time is passing, Tim.”

“ If I go that way,” he said, “ they will know you let me out. I ’ll go by the window.”

“ Well,” she reflected, “ they will know in time, anyway, that the letter came through me, but perhaps it will be as well not to know at first that I had a hand in it. Go, then, Tim.”

He stepped on the bench and opened the high window. Turning to say good-bye, he saw that tears were running down her cheeks. In a moment he had leaped down and clasped her in his arms.

“ Good-bye, good-bye!” he cried. “ I ’ll never forget you!”

“ Nor I you!” she answered, bending over him.

They kissed each other lovingly. Then he sprang again on the bench, wriggled through the window, and was gone.

James Waters the dyer, sleeping his Sunday

morning sleep, was aroused by a knocking at his door, and grudgingly went to the window. "Who 's there?" he demanded, thrusting his head out.

Tim's eager face looked up at him. "It 's me," the boy said breathlessly. "I — I 've come to stay with you, to live with you, if you 'll let me. Will you take me in?"

His face sank as he saw the workman's face grow grim. But the reply came heartily at last. "Will I take 'ee in?" asked Waters. "And will I thrash yon liverless McCook when he comes after 'ee? Indeed, I will!"

## CHAPTER VII

### A SUNDAY MORNING ARGUMENT

THE doctor gave Pelham to understand that his ankle was not very badly hurt, but that he must take care not to sprain it again. Mrs. Dodd thereupon gave her son the choice, either to stay in bed for a week or to go on crutches for two *and not set his foot to the ground*. "Crutches," chose Pelly. Mrs. Dodd warned him that it would be hard to watch the other boys playing and not be able to play, but he answered, "I can entertain myself, mother." So crutches were sent up from the doctor's, and were given to him early the next morning.

He was so proud of them that he was for starting out immediately after breakfast, to show them off. "Where do you propose to go?" asked his father.

“To Tim’s,” answered Pelly. “He hurt his hand yesterday, and I want to see how he is.”

His father smiled. “The carriage is going down to the post-office in a little while. Wait for that, and you shall go.”

So it was that Pelham, set down at the corner of Tim’s street, began to hobble toward the McCooks’ house, when his attention was attracted to a group of people in front of the house of Waters the dyer. There, much to Pelham’s surprise, he saw Tim on the steps, while Waters, standing before him as if to protect him, was looking calmly into the group below, whence issued a harsh voice, upraised in denunciation, which Pelham recognized as McCook’s. The boy hobbled thither in all haste, and thrust into the crowd, each member of which, as soon as he saw who was pushing from behind, instantly made way for him. Pelham arrived in front of them in time to hear McCook end his speech with: “And I want my boy!”

“You can’t have him,” answered Waters, briefly.

“And why not?” demanded McCook.

“Because he’s not your boy.”

The neighbors gasped with surprise, and with one accord moved closer, Pelham still in front, himself agape at the statement. McCook at first shrank back, but returned to the attack.

“Not my boy!” he cried. “And why not, I’d like to know?”

“I have here,” answered Waters, pointing within the house, “a letter of your wife’s, which Tim brought me early this morning. Mrs. McCook, expecting to die and doubting your treatment of the lad, wrote him that he was not her son, not even adopted, and bade him leave you if you insisted on his working in the mill.”

There was another gasp from the crowd, and then silence, while all eyes turned on McCook. He turned pale at the recital, but made an effort to summon his assurance. “What a

pack of lies!" he sneered. "Show me the letter."

"I'll show it to Mr. Dodd, or a magistrate," answered Waters. "That's all I'll do. But you know whether it tells the truth."

"It's all lies!" shouted McCook. "The boy's my son, and my neighbors won't see me denied him. All this is just to keep him from going to work, and they'll stand by me."

"I don't know about that," said sturdily a man at Pelham's side. The boy looked at him, and recognized Pat Cudahy, a weaver at the mill. "No boy of twelve has yet gone to work in this town, and none of us will help you put the lad in the mill, for all the law allows it."

Waters, on the steps, nodded profoundly. His eyes never left McCook's face, but Pelham noticed that beyond McCook was standing Rip, who now began to edge away along the circle of gazers, as if to get at Tim.

Instantly Pelham began to push back out of the crowd, so that, by making a larger circle, he could be at Tim's side before Rip. Once out-

side the crowd, he saw his father's carriage; for the coachman, seeing the crowd, could not resist the temptation to stay and listen.

"Drive home quick!" Pelly said to him. "Get father and bring him here at once!"

Delighted to have anything to do with the trouble, the coachman at once started for home, while Pelham squirmed into the crowd again at another place. This time he arrived by the steps and stood there close to Tim, who did not notice him, being, like Waters, intent upon watching McCook. Pelham looked at Rip, and saw that in the interval he had sidled a yard nearer to Tim.

"Well," McCook was saying, addressing the crowd in general, his temper by no means improved by Cudahy's bluff remark. "Well, the boy's mine, anyway, and I'll have him in spite of any one. Have I brought him up, and cared for him, and spent my money on him, to have him leave me now because he's afraid of work?"

"Oh, *he*'s not afraid of work," said Waters.

The emphasis raised a laugh from the bystanders. McCook was well known as lazy, — the first man to leave his loom at the sound of the noon whistle, the last to start again at one o'clock. The titter made him red with fury.


“Don't you cast any of your sneers at me, Waters!” he cried, shaking his fist at the man on the steps. “I'll not have it!”

“If the cap fits, put it on,” said Waters, indifferently, and the neighbors tittered again. McCook stepped nearer the house, and Rip, profiting by the movement, slipped still closer to Tim, so that a single rush would carry him upon the boy. Then he stopped, to watch his opportunity; and Pelham placed himself as near as he dared to the line which Rip must take. Pelham did not wish Rip to notice him.

“Give me that boy!” demanded McCook. “Give me him, I say!”

“Come and take him,” answered Waters.

McCook started forward, and stopped. He had no wish to come to grips with Waters, but again he heard the snicker from behind, and



between the taunts of Waters, the amusement of the neighbors, and the desire of his own mean heart, he was enraged almost beyond endurance. His foot touched something: it was a stone as large as his fist, and stooping, he picked it up.

“Now, give me the boy!” he commanded, drawing back his arm as if to throw.

There were not ten feet between the men, and Waters could not have dodged the stone. Instantly his indifference vanished, and his eyes flashed.

“Don’t throw that!” he ordered, and stepped to the ground.

At that Rip, seeing his chance, when all eyes were on the two men, dashed for Tim. No one saw but Pelham, not even Tim, who with beating heart was watching Waters and McCook. But Pelham hopped forward on his crutches, braced himself firmly, and deftly inserted one crutch between Rip’s legs.

There was a shout from the bystanders, for as Rip plunged at full length, butting the earth

with his head and ploughing it with his sharp shoulder, at the same moment McCook and Waters were engaged. The women, with little shrieks, started to run away, the men rushed to separate the fighters, and the whole scene was such as Pelham would have delighted in, had he not had his own hands full. For with a quickness which he had not expected, Rip sprang to his feet, and seeing who had foiled him, with a snarl of rage stood for a moment hesitating which boy to attack. But Tim saw his danger and doubled his fists, and Rip, concluding that the cripple was the easier prey, made for Pelham.

Instinct stood nobly by Pelly. He knew he could not flee, he knew he must not put his foot to the ground, but by the athletic instinct of one skilled in the use of his body, he understood what to do. Bracing himself again firmly on one crutch and his well leg, Pelham settled the other crutch against his shoulder, raised its point a little from the ground, and waited. Rip was coming with his head up,

intending thus to guard it from harm, but really exposing himself completely. At the right moment Pelham pointed his crutch just above the buckle of Rip's belt, and leaned toward him. All the force of the collision was supplied by Rip; the resistance was given by Pelham's braced crutch and leg. Beating his hands together about a foot from Pelham's face, in the vain endeavor to reach him, Rip let out all his breath in a loud gasp, and sank in an inglorious heap. At the same moment Tim leaped from the steps to Pelham's aid.

Then it was all over. Mr. Dodd's carriage came dashing up, and he leaped out, ready to interfere. But Rip lay breathless upon the ground, his "wind" gone, and McCook was standing very quietly before Waters, at the end of the most thorough shaking which man ever gave to man.

Those who saw that shaking described it afterward with delight. Reaching McCook just as he was about to throw his stone, Waters had seized him by the shoulders and pressed his

arms to his side. The stone dropped. Then with a rapid movement back and forth Waters had appeared to be shaking McCook's very head from his body. Frightened by the close neighborhood of Waters' stern face and flashing eyes, the weaver made no attempt at resistance, but yielded himself meekly. For a short space he seemed to be strung on wires, and very poorly also, for the onlookers expected him to come to pieces. His limbs jerked this way and that, his head nodded a violent assent to every movement of Waters' hands, his eyes joggled, and his very teeth rattled in his head. Mastering this extreme agitation as well as possible, with all mildness McCook managed to say:

“D-d-don't!”

The retreating women, casting backward glances, saw the absurd sight, and paused to laugh, while the men guffawed. Waters himself ceased his efforts, and released McCook, saying with disappointment, “I can't even shake any manhood into ye.” And Mr. Dodd,

stepping before the stammering weaver, could not help smiling as he asked:

“What ’s all this?”

“He hit me!” cried Rip, raising himself on one hand and pointing the other at Pelly.

“Your son hit me, Mr. Dodd!”

“What did you do first?” asked Mr. Dodd. Though he had seen nothing, it was no random question, for he knew both Pelly and Rip.

Tim supplied the answer. “He was going to hit me.” Mr. Dodd looked for a moment more at Rip, then looked away. And Rip, having gained his breath, got himself to his feet and skulked off. Mr. Dodd turned to the lookers-on.

“Since it is Sunday morning,” he said, “you will excuse me if I suggest that you leave Mr. Waters’ yard. As I am a magistrate, I will ask a few questions of these two men. Now,” he said, when the neighbors had departed with broad smiles, “I ’d like to know the whole of this.”

He heard the story, read the letter, and at

last, ignoring Pelham, who crowded close to his side, he looked from sulky McCook to Tim, who stood waiting with both fear and hope.


“McCook,” said Mr. Dodd at last, “tell me the truth of what your wife wrote in this letter. Is it so, or is ’nt it?”

Under his eye McCook shifted uneasily on his feet, looked at the ground, and worked his jaws. “Well,” he said at last in disgust, “it ’s so.”

Tim sighed with relief, and Pelham yelped with delight. “Go away, Pelly,” said his father, “if you can’t keep quiet. Now, McCook, do you claim the boy, or don’t you?”

“I don’t want him,” burst out McCook, viciously. “I wash my hands of him. I’ve toiled and struggled for him, I’ve denied myself for him, and he won’t love me. I’ll have no more to do with him, no, not even if he comes begging me to take him in!”

“When he asks that, then ye can deny him,” said Waters, dryly, and Mr. Dodd with difficulty kept from smiling as he asked:



“What is the boy’s real name?”

McCook opened his mouth to speak, looked at the others, and paused, for both Tim and Waters leaned toward him eagerly. McCook’s eyes shifted to the ground.

“I don’t know,” he said.

“I suppose it’s a matter of record,” suggested Mr. Dodd.

“The mother was buried under the name of Mary Smith,” admitted McCook.

Tim sighed with relief. Under the circumstances Smith was a far better name than McCook.

“But,” said McCook, in a curious tone of satisfaction, “she had different initials on her clothes. You can find that she died bearing that name, but my wife knew it was n’t hers. My wife knew her name.”

“What was it?” asked Mr. Dodd.

McCook would not look at him. “She never told me.”

“What were the initials?”

“I never knew.”

They believed that he lied, and Tim knew it. Tim knew well enough McCook's shifty look, and also his obstinate one. His heart sank; then his name was not even Smith. Though Mr. Dodd questioned further, he could not make McCook "remember," and at last dismissed him.

"To-morrow," said he, "I shall direct the boy to be brought before me, and will take him under my legal care. If anyone," and he looked at Waters, "comes before me, offering to take charge of the boy, and if the boy accepts his guardianship, then I will give the boy into that man's charge."

McCook turned to go. "*I* sha'n't be coming to ask for him," he sneered.

Waters stepped forward. "But I shall!" he said.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NEW WORKMAN

**I**T was not until night that a new idea came to McCook. At supper he suddenly struck his hand on the table and roared for his daughter. "Bridget, where did Tim get that letter?"

Bridget came and stood before him, pale as usual, but with a new gleam in her eye. "I gave it to him," she said.

"Knowing all the time what was in it?"

"Yes."

"Having kept it since your mother died?"

"Yes."

"By all the powers!" he shouted, rising with the same motion with which he had struck Tim on the night before. But Bridget raised her finger and pointed it at him, and he stopped suddenly.

“I’m eighteen years of age,” said she. “I’m one of the hardest-working girls in this town. There isn’t a lady here but will pay good wages to a willing girl, and if you strike me I’ll never come inside your house again.”

McCook gaped at her, while Rip sat in sullen astonishment. If Bridget left them, they well knew there would be trouble for them. Bridget was cheaper than any servant, for she worked without wages, lived in shabby clothes, and ate little food. McCook was aghast.

“Why — why,” he stammered, “I was n’t going to strike you.”

She turned on her heel. “Take care you never do.”

McCook, during the rest of the meal, was so short with his son that at last Rip rose from his seat and shuffled out. “Aw,” he said at the door, “you’re too cross to live with.” McCook paid no heed to him, having just received still another idea. He brooded

over it for some time, until at last he rose and went stealthily upstairs to Bridget's room. Listening at the door, at length he ventured to open it.

There sat the girl herself, gazing out the window. "What do you want?" she demanded.

"I want the chain and locket your mother gave you."

"Why?" asked Bridget.

"I just want it."

"She told me to give it to Tim's wife when he marries."

"I'll give it to Tim's wife."

Bridget reflected. She never wore the chain; with her shabby clothes finery was not for her. She rose and gave her father the chain and locket, and he took them to his room. Opening the locket, he read within its rim, in tiny lettering: "J. W. to M. S." Then, grinning, he hid it carefully in his bureau.

Two days later he brought a stranger home

to supper. "This is Mr. Volger," he said, introducing him to Bridget.

She looked the stranger over. A great scar ran from ear to chin. He was dark, fresh-shaven, but not over-neat, and he did not meet her glance squarely. He spoke in a smooth voice. "Very glad to meet you, Miss." He lingered, she found, on the last word of each sentence, in a caressing fashion, as if trying to make friends.

"He's going to board and lodge with us," her father added.

"Oh, is he?" asked Bridget in surprise.

"He'll sleep in Tim's bed," explained McCook.

"If Miss McCook is willing," put in Volger.

Bridget said nothing, but served the meal, and her father, who watched her carefully, imagined that she was thinking. At the end of the meal Volger, carefully polite, asked Bridget if she objected to his smoking.

"No," said Bridget. Then she asked

abruptly, "How much are you going to pay a week?"

He was taken by surprise, and answered truthfully, "Four dollars."

"And cheap enough," she said. Then she turned to her father. "Every week he pays half of the money to me."

"Oh," said McCook, staring at her, "for the marketing?"

"No," Bridget answered firmly; "for my own use."

McCook tried to stare her down, but failed, for neither his eyes nor Rip's could ever meet another person's long. He saw that she meant it, and that there would be trouble if she did not get it. Rapid calculation showed him that he had better yield.

"Oh, if you want it," he said.

"I do want it," Bridget replied. "I want it paid to me, and not to you. — And every week," she added as she left the room.

McCook sat thinking uncomfortably of his daughter's sudden development of character.

He had never given her money regularly, and had never given much. Now, at a stroke, she had wrested from him a comfortable allowance. It looked as if he might have trouble in the future.

And Volger, as he lit his pipe, chuckled to himself. "Our friend is in danger of a strike," he thought.

Volger was the latest comer at the mill. That Monday morning he had presented himself at Mr. Dodd's office, asking for work; and Mr. Dodd, being short of weavers, turned him over to the foreman, who tried him, found that he could run eight looms, and engaged him. At dinner that night, however, Mr. Dodd suddenly turned to his youngest son.

"Was the man who struck you the other day dressed like a tramp?"

"More like a workman, sir," answered Pelham. "His clothes were n't ragged."

"Did he have a scar on his face?"

"I did n't see any," replied Pelham.

"I wonder," said Mr. Dodd, turning to his

eldest son, "if that man is the one we took on at the mill to-day?"

Bob shook his head. "Pelly's man was bearded, sir."

"Bearded," agreed Pelly, decidedly.

"All right," said Mr. Dodd, and dismissed the subject.

"But you have a new man at the mill?" Pelly asked.

"Yes," his brother answered. "Come down and see us sometime, now that you can't run about."

"I will," Pelham promised.

Pelham did not go at once, for his days were full of interest since he contrived to make his crutches a distinction. That he was no longer like other boys was not to be denied; therefore he claimed privileges from his mother and the cook, in the shape of more sweets at table, or extra cookies between meals. Among the boys he lent his crutches as favors, or even rented them for apples or candy; and while thus taking toll he criticised all per-

formers, claiming that he was the sole experienced, professional crutch-hobbler in the village. When he consented to umpire at ball-games he was very lofty in his manner and short with his critics, all of which affectation the older lads took in good part, and snubbed him only occasionally, knowing that he was but "putting it on," and that he really needed something to amuse him.

And Pelham, though very much of a pet, was not spoiled, but was saved from that most miserable of fates by his own natural earnestness and straightforwardness. He was spirited, lively, and quite unwilling to receive help from anyone in games or contests, preferring to be beaten if he could not win by himself, and asking no allowances on account of his size. He was forgiving after a quarrel, manly in taking a hurt, and always tried to play fair.

Pelham lived in a town so small that every one knew everybody, where all were judged for themselves, and where each made his place by his own merits. The boys all went to school

together, and played together, for their homes were so close that they could easily gather. The one really good ball-field was on Mr. Dodd's land, and there Arthur Dodd and Pelham his brother played with Duck Lanigan and Hop Cudahy, whose fathers worked in the Dodd mills; and all the differences that the boys knew between them was that Arthur was the fastest runner, and Duck the best pitcher, and Pelham the quickest of all, and Hop the jolliest.

In this crowd of boys, then, Pelham was recognized as the "spryest," the most determined, and the most independent. His independence was a valuable quality, making him think little of the praises which he won. And it helped him now that he was disabled, by keeping him satisfied to be by himself; for when the boys went where he could not follow, or when he grew tired of watching sports which he could not share, then he would go away alone. And most he liked, when thus thrown upon himself, to go to his father's

mill, where his brother Bob worked, where Arthur would work, and where Pelham himself meant to work also.

He liked the great rumbling, trembling buildings, and knew their every part. There was the office where his father sat at his desk, and where Bob went in and out with duties and reports. There was the mill-race that turned the great wheel, the boilers which drove the engines. He liked the various rooms, — the dyeing-room, the cutting-room, the shipping-room; but most he was fascinated by the looms, which were all together in one great room, where men worked amid running belts, clashing machines, and the noiseless whirling of great wheels and arms of steel. He liked to wander among the looms, for he knew each of them, knew the men, and would stand for minutes at a time, watching the wonderful actions of the complicated machines, which almost seemed to think, so perfect was their work.

The boys were always welcome at the mill,

for Mr. Dodd wished to have not only his sons interested in the work, but the other lads also; and he tried to make them feel that here was open to them a place to earn their livings when they were older. So the Irish boys had in the mills almost the same interest as Pelham, for their fathers worked there, and the boys went in sometimes to say "Hullo," and to hang about loom or cutting-bench and watch the work which they intended to do later themselves. Every process in the making of corduroy, from spinning the thread to pressing the dyed and finished piece, was known to the boys, most of whom had already decided which department they liked best, and were already, in thought, spinners, weavers, cutters, or dyers. And so there was among the boys a strong feeling both of rivalry and of unity, for they expected to work side by side, and each boy intended to become the most skilful workman in the mill.

Mr. Dodd encouraged this feeling, yet with a fear that it might not last, a dread lest the

little paradise be entered by the serpent. In fact, he was now beginning to wonder if the misfortune had not come at last.

“What makes you look so blue, father?” asked Bob, when for the third time one day he noticed his father sitting very thoughtful. “Anything wrong?”

“I’m troubled,” said his father. “But it had to come some day, I suppose. You know Volger, the new workman?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You have noticed what a talker he is?”

“Why, yes, sir. The men listen to him a great deal at the noon hour, and some of them don’t go home to lunch any more, but bring their food here, so as to be with him.”

“I’m afraid he will bring in new ideas, Bob.”

“What kind of ideas, sir?”

“Labor-unionism.”

“Well,” said Bob, heartily, “if he does form a union here, where’s the harm?”

“None, if they are temperate. But new

ideas are upsetting, and the men may go too far. I've watched Volger as he talks, and he is very vehement. He'll make the men discontented."

"Discontented?" cried Bob. "There is n't a set of men in the state that's better paid, or better treated either."

"Yes," said Mr. Dodd, "and I depend on them to remember it. But if they became discontented, think what would happen."

He left his desk and went to the window. "What a peaceful town we have here!" he said, looking out upon the fields and houses. "What good feeling we have! There's more neighborliness here, between employers and employed, than in any other mill-village that I know. There's not the trace of an idea that my sons are better than the workmen's sons. Look over there, where the boys are playing ball, — nothing could be friendlier. But if new ideas should upset the men's minds, all the neighborliness might be lost, the friendships broken, and

we could scarcely get back to the old footing again."

Bob walked once up and down the office. "You are right," he said when he paused. "It would be a real misfortune. I'm sorry we ever took in a workman we didn't know all about. But we can discharge him."

Mr. Dodd shook his head. "We have no good reason. The man is a good worker. But if I could find any good cause for sending him away, I would do it instantly."

## CHAPTER IX

### PELHAM IS TOO GENEROUS

**I**T was on that afternoon that Pelham went to the mill, for the reason that the other boys left their baseball to go fishing. Pelham had sent Tim with them. "You ought to go," said Pelham. "Mr. Waters would like you to bring him some fish." So the two cronies parted, Tim to get fish for his benefactor, and Pelham to go upon his crutches to the mill, where he wandered about among his friends, the workmen, until he came to the looms, which he watched with the usual fascination.

Then he remembered that there was a new man there whom he had not yet seen. He asked Cudahy about him, — Pat Cudahy the weaver. "Is the new man a good fellow?"

“That he is,” said Cudahy, heartily. “A great talker he is.”

“What does he talk about?” asked Pelham.

Cudahy hesitated, and seemed embarrassed, but the workman who stood back to back with him turned to answer. It was Rip McCook, who managed but four looms, while Johnny Bragin, beside him, worked four others, the two doing between them the work of one good workman. “He talks about the rights of workingmen,” said Rip, “and the way to better ourselves.”

Rip’s tone was defiant, and Pelham turned with little prickles of antagonism running up his neck into his hair. There always was a hopeless disagreement between the two.

“Better yourselves?” asked Pelham, shrewdly. “Are n’t you satisfied, Rip?”

“Sure I’m not!” answered Rip, loudly. “I’ve not got half my rights yet.”

Other workmen turned to look, and Johnny Bragin stared. Pelham smiled innocently.

“Father will give you four more looms

just as soon as you are able to run them," he said.

McCook glared, uncertain whether Pelham had intended to give so sharp a thrust. But Cudahy burst out laughing, and Johnny Bragin followed. "That'll do for you, Rip," said Cudahy. "Don't you say another word to-day." Rip's glare did not daunt Cudahy, but when it fell upon Johnny Bragin he bit his laugh suddenly in two, and choked back the rest.

"Go along with you, Master Pelham," said Cudahy, "and see the new man yourself. He's over behind the big loom in the corner." And Pelham, keeping his face sober, walked away. He knew he had added one more to the causes why Rip should dislike him, but with native recklessness he did not care.

As he walked he exchanged remarks with the men that he passed. They liked him because he liked them; they were a company of friends. Many a man wagged his head behind Pelham's back, and remarked to his

neighbor, "That's the boy for me!" They would do anything for him. Pelham reached the looms where the new man worked, and walked around them until in the corner he found him. Volger had stopped a loom to tie a broken thread, and turned to look at Pelham. Then he started.

"Oh!" cried the boy, and started too.

It was not for Volger's start, nor was it for anything really definite that Pelham recognized the man. The beard was gone, the scar showed clearly, the clothes were different, and yet this was the man who had struck him on the day of the paper-chase.

"So it's you after all," said Pelham.

Volger came forward quickly, spoke eagerly and in a low voice, and used his hands to make gestures. "I have an apology for you," he said, rapidly, anxious not to be overheard. "I'm sorry I — did that, the other day."

"I don't see why you did it," answered downright Pelly.

"Why," said Volger, hesitating, "you see

—there were some clippings among those papers you tore up. I wanted them.”

“Striking me would n’t bring them back,” the boy answered.

“Yes, but —” Volger answered, “I — I lost my head, I guess.”

“I guess you did,” the boy agreed, with perfect coolness. It was not in his code to strike a smaller boy except to administer just and deliberate punishment, and justice and deliberation were the last words to apply to Volger’s action.

“And,” said Volger, shifting his ground, “if you tell on me I’ll probably be discharged.” Pelly nodded. “And you don’t know what it is to be out of work.”

The man irritated Pelham. His eye was not honest, his voice was too soft. The boy knew that a word from him would cost the man his place; Volger would even have to leave town if the workmen knew that he was the one who struck Pelham. He hesitated.

“Please don’t tell,” begged Volger.

The lad felt a genuine contempt for one who, having committed a fault, would ask to have it concealed. "Oh," he said, turning away, "if you are n't willing to tell what you did, I won't tell upon you."

## CHAPTER X

### NEW IDEAS

**T**IM now lived with Waters. On the morning after his escape from McCook's shed window Tim had been taken by Waters before Mr. Dodd, who had legally given him into the dyer's hands, to care for under the supervision of Mr. Dodd himself. Waters had then taken Tim home, and for the first time led him upstairs.

Beside Waters' bedroom was a smaller room, in which also there was a bed. "There," said Waters, "that's your room and bed. I've had a bed there for eleven years, ever since I came to town, with the idea that some day a boy like you would occupy it. You're the age to a week of the son I lost, and I always meant to take a lad in his place, but I never did. I could n't take a baby, or a child; but

you, at his age, are able to look after yourself, and help me, so I think we'll get along together. What do you think?"

"I think we shall," said Tim, his eyes shining.

"We'll get along like a pair of clever bachelors," said Waters. "I'll do the cooking; you can sweep. I'll chop the wood; you make the beds. That is, you see, I'll do the heavy work, and you the light, and we can hit it off first-rate. Think so?"

"I'll try to pay you for my keep," answered Tim, earnestly.

"None of that!" said Waters, quickly, and speaking, as he did when moved or interested, with more of his dialect, which at times disappeared entirely. "None of that, I tell 'ee. Do 'ee understand now, boy, this is a bargain between us, and I get as much as I give. I give my house, thee thy company, and we both put in all our good will. On that footing there will be naught too much on either side, and no gratitude, neither, so be it we can only

take it out in love. And I start thee fresh in life with new clothes, and ten cents a week regularly to thy pocket money."

"Oh, Mr. Waters!" cried Tim, clasping the big brown hand.

"Call me guardian, lad," said the dyer, kindly, and in his eyes there was a glimmer of tears. "I'll never have a boy call me father, but call me guardian, and that will be next best."

"Guardian, then," said Tim, his own eyes moist at the thought that he was really loved. "My own guardian, and oh, I wish you were my father!"

"I too, lad," agreed Waters. "And now, thou hast no name, if that scrawny ruffian is to be believed. Choose thee a name to be known by, if it be only John Smith."

"I have neither name nor birthday either," said Tim, wistfully, "but if you're willing I'll be called Tim Waters, guardian."

"Tim for the son that Mrs. McCook lost," mused the dyer, "and Waters for my own

boy. That's a good combination, lad, and no one can say aught against it. And so it shall be."

Therefore, when "Tim McCook" was next spoken of among the boys, Tim told them that he was now Tim Waters, if they would please call him so. And he was outwardly so different, being no longer ragged nor patched, that the change came easily to his mates. Tim Waters he was from that time on, — a boy who had nothing more to fear on going home at night or on waking in the morning. No orders, no cuffs, no threats, overshadowed his thoughts; and he was a happy boy. Waters had a kindly way of telling him what to do, of correcting his faults, and giving him information; in fact, their whole intercourse was so pleasant that sometimes it seemed to the boy as if it were too good to last. But he did all he could to pay Waters, — since it never occurred to Tim that the deep, silent satisfaction of the man could be anything like his own joy. He did not know how Waters

watched him, how the man thrilled with the boy's affection, and trembled lest anything should happen to him; how each night, while Tim slept, his guardian stood over him in prayer for his welfare. Tim's unthinking happiness was great, but the man's fervent thankfulness for this gift from heaven was unmeasurable.

"Is there anything you lack?" he asked Tim once, and urged him to tell when he saw that the boy hesitated.

"Biddy," acknowledged Tim. "I worry how she's getting along. Fath—McCook has only her to work off his tempers on."

"Go and see her when we're at the mill," advised Waters. "It's you she'll be missing more than she minds her father's tempers, I'm thinking."

So that day, when the men were at work, Tim went to McCook's house, and found Biddy at her sweeping. She was delighted to see him, and he knew that she was touched by his remembrance.

“How much better you look,” she said, after their first greeting.

“And you,” he replied, looking at her clothes. “You have a new dress.”

“Yes,” she answered with satisfaction. “I’m on wages now,—but no thanks to father.”

“Oh, I’m sorry!” he cried. “No, no, I’m glad if you have money, but I brought you some I earned picking berries.”

“Does n’t Mr. Waters take that?” she asked.

“He?” cried Tim in scorn. “He gives me ten cents a week, and there’s few of the boys get that. He says it’s to teach me to use money.”

“Then use your earnings yourself,” she said kindly, kissing him. “I’ve fought my way clear at last, I’m glad to say, and father will not lay his hand on me again.” And she told him the history of it.

“How do you like Volger for a boarder?” asked Tim.

“Well enough,” she answered. “Only he

talks too much, and the men come here to hear him, and litter the room, so that it's harder than ever to keep it clean."

"What does he talk about?" asked Tim, as Pelham had done before him.

"Oh, he wants a union, and he talks of strikes."

"Strikes?" cried Tim. "Strikes, Biddy! What for?"

"For excitement, I guess," she answered shrewdly.

Tim was not content with the answer. The very name of a strike was a shock to him, and his interest in Volger, as a possible mischief-maker, was much increased. He looked at him curiously whenever they met, and had peculiar occasion to notice Volger's scar on a day when in the street Tim and Waters suddenly came face to face with Volger and the McCooks.

The weaver had been looking back, and turned to see Waters suddenly near him. Volger's face flushed red, and the scar that

ran from ear to chin stood out white. He stopped still, as if in surprise, and waited for Waters to look at him.

Waters had been looking at the McCooks. The father dropped his eyes and walked on, but for a moment Rip met Waters' glance before he, too, looked away and passed on. Waters, triumphant, cast a look at the McCooks' companion. Tim expected Volger to speak.

But to the lad's surprise Volger had recovered himself. His face was still red, and the scar showed plainly, but he remained silent, looked at the ground, waited for Waters to pass, and then followed the McCooks.

"That man's name is Waterman?" he asked of them.

"Waters," they answered. "Do you know him?"

"Never saw him before," said Volger.

"Then how 'd you make such a good guess?" growled Rip. Volger answered hastily, "Oh, I don't know." He left the subject then, but

that night he brought the talk to Waters, and learned all that the McCooks knew of him: when he came to the town, his history, and how he lived. "And you don't like him?" he asked at the end.

"Like him?" they cried together. "We hate him!"

Tim, going along at Waters' side, had said: "Mr. Volger seemed to know you."

"Did he?" asked Waters. "I was just thinking that his face was in a way familiar. Volger was his name, you said? I never knew a man of that name. No, nor I never saw a man with such a scar. He's from the city?" he asked the boy.

"From New York," answered Tim.

"Then keep away from him," directed Waters. "I dislike city men."

Tim followed his guardian's direction, but yet he was curious to see what Volger would do the next time he met Waters. At first it seemed as if Volger was avoiding the dyer, but after a while, in much the same circum-

stances, they met again. Waters walked along steadily, looking straight ahead of him, quite unconscious of the other's presence; but Volger turned his face away, while again the scar showed clearer than before. Tim wondered if he were afraid to be recognized.

Following up another subject of interest, Tim spoke to his guardian one day at noon. "Why should we need a union here?" he asked.

"For little good in a place like this," answered Waters. "We have few grievances."

Grievances! It was the first time Tim ever heard the word so used, in the sense of a workman's complaints against the conditions of his life. But he was to hear it often enough in the future.

"It's like a nation with a big army or navy," went on Waters, "this having of unions is. All very well when the fellows across the frontier are waiting for a chance to hurt you, for then you are able to defend yourself. But workmen with a union are

seldom happy till they find a grievance, just as a nation that 's looking for trouble is always sure to get it. Ah, my boy, I 've been in the big factories, and I 've seen strikes, — aye, and suffered at them too, when with no fault of my own, willing and ready to work, I had to go home each night with nothing to give my wife, and our savings wasting away day by day. Give a boy a gun and he 'll want to kill something, and put a union in the hands of men with no sense, and they 'll turn the whole village upside down."

"Then why do men want unions anyway?" asked Tim.

"Unions are valuable when the employers are grinding you down," explained Waters. "Too much work and too little pay, or when the men's health is in danger, or something of that sort. Oh, unions have done immense good, there 's no denying that, and I 've no wish to deny it. But there 's never been a single thing that the men could ask for here, but came without the asking. Mr. Dodd's

fair, and his men don't have to threaten him to get their rights."

"But are we sure to have trouble if we get a union?"

"No, I'm glad to say. If the men that want trouble only take it out in quarrelling among themselves, then they'll leave the rest of us in peace. And there's no use in borrowing trouble now. — Ah, Tim, we'll have a fine time together, thee and I, when Mr. Dodd takes 'ee into the dyeing-room, and I begin to train 'ee for my place."

Tim was always glad when his guardian called him "thee," and glad also when they spoke of the work. He was ambitious to learn the art of dyeing, — an art which Waters loved with such a love as inspires a painter or a sculptor. In his solitary life it had become his great passion, which kept him happy when a weaker man would have broken down from loneliness.

"How can a man become a dyer?" asked Tim.

“ Ah,” explained Waters, “ ’t is partly knowledge and partly nature, and to my thinking it ’s more nature than knowledge. There ’s no taking any man from the looms or the cutting-room and making him a dyer, — a dyer that is a dyer, you know. No, nor will your college man with all his books equal the man that has the instinct in him. Yellow and blue make green, but just how much yellow and how much blue will make the green you want, — not all the books can tell you that, nor will experience either, unless a man ’s got the *sense* in him.”

Waters was a firm believer in the dyer’s *sense*, — a sixth faculty, or an instinct, which he claimed was in only a few men. Mr. Dodd believed in it, he said; at any rate, Mr. Dodd believed in Waters, for through his hands passed every bolt of cloth which the mill turned out, or every bolt but a very few, and Waters could therefore either make or mar the whole year’s work. The quiet, gray-haired workman was absolute master in the

dye-room, and he was the best paid of all the workmen. It was the *sense* that did it, he would explain.

“Nate has the sense, has n’t he?” asked Tim.

Waters stiffened where he sat. “Nate?” he cried. “A fellow with two wash-tubs and a clothes-wringer, that dyes seven or eight dozen bolts in a year! Did you know that last year I dyed eighteen thousand?”

“But Nate’s bolts get the largest price, don’t they?” Tim asked.

Waters threw him a glance of reproach. “Perhaps they do,” he said coldly. “I don’t have the selling of them.”

“Oh,” cried Tim, “forgive me, forgive me, guardian! I did n’t mean to hurt you.” He pressed up to Waters’ side, and caught his great hand.

“All right, all right,” said the dyer. “There, I’ll agree that Nate’s a man of very respectable abilities, and could do a good deal with himself if he’d only stop living like a man of

the woods, and study with me for a while. But if you speak of the price of goods, just remember that the Dodd mills corduroy gets the very best in the market, and people have been known to say that Mr. Dodd has two of the best dyers in the whole trade, be it in America or in England." He held his head high for a moment, then turned to the lad to ask, "But you don't go to Nate's often, I hope."

"Oh, guardian," cried Tim, fearing to be forbidden, "we boys just love to go there, and I pick all my berries on his land."

"Well, then," said Waters, generously, "go there when thee wilt, but if 'ee think of his dyeing, remember the man's not regular, like me. It's all mess and guess with him, and he gets his colors more by luck than anything else."

Tim thought shrewdly of the *sense* which Waters had been exalting but a moment before, and which he now abandoned on the mention of Nate; the boy got a glimpse of the professional feeling to which even the best

of men are sometimes subject, and wondered if Waters could be jealous of Nate. But the dyer showed that he was not.

“There,” he said, “I must be going to my work. Do ’ee go where thou wilt, even to Nate’s, and have a good time in thy own way.”

## CHAPTER XI

### NATE

**C**URIOSLY, it was to Nate's that the boys went that very afternoon. Except on that day when he went fishing, Tim had not left Pelly to go with the other boys, but Pelham's ankle now was well. Summer was at its prime; it was a day too hot for baseball, but as the boys lolled in the shade of the woods that bordered the ball-field, they decided that they must do something. But what? Hare-and-hounds was impossible on such a sultry day, and even the idea of swimming was not tempting, for the long walk back from the pond would make the boys as hot as before, as they had learned by hard experience. Tim, remembering his talk with Waters, thought of Nate, but did not mention him. Pelly did, however.

“Let’s go to Nate’s!” he shouted, and the rest agreed at once.

Deeper into the woods they trooped, and walked along the shaded ways, delighting in the little airs that stirred there, and the berries that grew. They climbed above the town, and from little clearings saw the roofs below; at last they came to what had once been a farm amid the trees, but where now the saplings were trespassing on the fallow land, and where no crops were sown. There the blackberries grew thick, the blueberries were ripening, and sumach and briars rioted.

“Not many berries just here,” grumbled Duck Lanigan. “I bet Nate picked a bushel off this place before the dew was gone.”

“He did,” said Tim. “I saw him leaving the market this morning, folding up a dollar bill.”

“But he must be here,” said Arthur. “Let’s shout for him.” They shouted all together, but no answer came.

“There’s no knowing where he is,” said

Arthur, "and there's twenty acres to hunt for him on. Boys, let's guess for the likeliest place."

"He's at the cave!" cried Lawrence.

"He's at the spring!" asserted Duck.

"The sugar-house!" guessed Arthur.

"He's at the farmhouse," stated Pelly, with such certainty that the boys all stopped to consider.

"What should he be doing there?" demanded Hop Cudahy. "He works there, but he picked berries this morning, and he never works twice in a day."

That was a jest on Nate's known idleness which made the boys laugh, but Pelham stuck to his point. "I know better," he said. "Maybe he's dyeing, and anyway, he's reading the book I lent him this morning." That struck the boys at once, for next to doing nothing, Nate loved reading.

"It was the 'Boy's King Arthur,' my old copy," Pelham said, and clinched his argument, all but for the locality.

“He’ll be reading, then,” Lawrence said.  
“But I think he’s at the cave.”

“The cave!” shouted most of the others, and for the cave they started in a body, cautiously, for they meant to surprise him at his book. Up along the hillside, through the rank growths, and then again into the woods they went, until within a clump of ever-shady pines they closed in upon their goal. Two great twin-boulders were reared side by side, until their tops met, and from that cleft a large pine rose, sending its long roots down into the ground. The boys crept, and skulked, and peered around the giant stones, until they saw the black mouth of the cave, but at its cool opening there lolled no lazy human form. Mistaken! They came out from their coverts and consulted together.

The sugar-house was their next decision, and turning abruptly downhill, but away from their former path, they streamed through the woods once more. The pines gave way to a grove of great sugar-maples, which the In-

dians might have tapped before the white men came, and from which Nate now, each spring, drew the sap to make the best sugar (so the town claimed) which was ever made in Vermont, let alone Massachusetts. But at the sugar-house, with its brick chimney and great skimming-pans, there was no Nate. And at the spring, where bubbled forth his never-failing supply of pure water, there was no one to surprise.

“Well,” demanded Pelly, “will you try the house now?”

There was nothing else to do. Downhill they went again until they saw a group of dilapidated buildings: a barn with gaping roof, a bulging woodshed, and a house whose patches of fresh shingles upon roof and sides alone gave proof of recent occupation. Around the house bloomed the flowers of an ancient garden, unpicked but not untended, for no weeds grew among them.

The house was low, having but a story and a half; away from it at the rear ran a shed,

upon the windows of which the boys fixed their eyes. The windows were big, and low, and open; with one idea most of the boys scattered and began to creep toward them with the stealth of Indians, using the cover which the plants and shrubs afforded. From time to time they craned their necks to discover if Nate were in the shed.

But Pelly made one dash across the open, scuttling from clump to clump but not pausing at any, until reaching a great lilac he stopped behind it, and looked into the shed. There, sitting upon an upturned basket, among odd machines, was a long, lank man, intent upon a book. His clothes were patched, his brown hair was long and bleached, his hands and neck were thin and deeply tanned. With one hand Nate was turning a crank, by which means a machine was passing into a tub a long roll of dark fabric, raising it out again, and rolling it up once more. But Nate's eyes were upon his book, which he held in his other hand. As the boys stole nearer in response to Pelly's

excited signal, Nate raised his head and showed his face, like the rest of him, long, thin and brown. He sighed with interest as he turned a page, and then went on with his reading.

The boys closed in, making ready for a rush and shout when Pelly should give the signal. Nearer and nearer they drew; Pelham looked and saw that they were all ready, and took breath for the shout.

Then Nate, rolling his eyes up from his book, and addressing — apparently — a large wasps' nest that decorated one of the windows, said placidly, "Come in, boys!"

They trooped in, disgusted, and stood before him. "How did you know we were there?" Pelly demanded.

"To tell the truth," answered Nate, "I did n't know *you* were there, Pelly; you kept so quiet. But there's no mistaking Curly's snicker nor Hop's giggle, nor even Duck's snort, so I surmised somebody was about."

He spoke solemnly, but there was a twinkle

in his eye of the genuine Yankee kind, and he ended with a wink. Nate was a character of the Squibob type, and the boys loved his drollery.

“Nate,” said Duck, “if you don’t say you didn’t know I was there, I’ll push you into your own tub of dye.”

Arthur was more peaceful, though more sarcastic. “How comes it,” he asked, “that you are working twice on the same day?”

Nate, who had not for a moment ceased his turning, looked at his tub. “Had the stuff all made up,” he said with a pride which he could not conceal. “Best in a long time. What do you think of it, boys?”

As he spoke, the last of the roll of corduroy passed into the tub and presently came up again. Nate stood up and laid aside his book, released the roll and put it upon another machine, and began to pass the cloth through a trough of clear and running water. The boys crowded closer, and Arthur bent over the cloth.

“Father’s best,” he said, after looking at it.

“Your pa don’t give me anything but his best,” Nate said. It was indeed a fine-ribbed corduroy, although only an expert — such as the smallest of the boys was fitting himself to be — could tell from its present draggled state what it would be in the end. Nate had been dyeing, and now was rinsing it. The boys, changed from friends into students and keen critics, by turns looked narrowly at the cloth.

“Dress goods?” asked Hop Cudahy.

“Of course!” answered three of his cronies together. “You don’t suppose Mr. Dodd would give Nate anything else, do you?” Hop apologized hastily, and with the others praised Nate’s work. His eye twinkled the brighter.

“But which of you can tell me the color?” he asked.

“It’s brown,” said Lawrence, after examining carefully. Nate shook his head.

“Guess again,” he said.

“Blue,” said Duck, and Nate laughed outright. “Tan,” hazarded Biff Spots. “Violet,” guessed one. “Indigo,” ventured another, but still Nate shook his head.

“Kinder generally near it, some of ye,” he said, “but ye have n’t hit the trade-name of it yet. I guess Mr. Dodd’s sons will know, however. Do you, Arthur?”

“I know,” said Arthur, confidently.

“I don’t feel sure,” acknowledged Pelham.

“Well, you ’re pretty young,” said Nate. “But you,” and he turned upon Tim, “you ’ve been living with the master-dyer, and ought to know, for all you ’re so small. Tell us what it is.”

His tone was kindly, in spite of his laughing words, and Tim, after looking once more at the corduroy, looked up at Nate to gain confidence for an opinion. And Nate gave him confidence. Upon his long and somewhat comic face there came at times the melancholy look of a dreamer, such as Pelham had seen there when Nate first looked up from his

book. This look, so far from joking, Tim saw now in Nate's eyes, and he recognized in him Waters' own devotion to an art. Nate was odd, he did not care to live much with people, he was as cranky over his hobbies as ever Yankee was, — and that is saying a great deal, — but he understood boys, he loved them, and was not afraid to show them, now and then, how deep his heart was set upon his passions, knowing that the lads could not be harmed by the things that he loved best. Nate was fondest of his dyeing and his outdoor life, and once Mr. Dodd had said, when his sister complained that his sons went too much to Nate's: "You say they will learn all his tastes? I couldn't ask anything better!"

So Tim, seeing in Nate's eyes the serious love of his art, took confidence to speak his opinion. "It does n't look much like it now, I know," he said, "but still I think that it will be plum-color."

"Plum-color?" cried incredulous Curly, and

some of the boys laughed. But Arthur said "Plum-color" positively, and Nate, clapping Tim on the shoulder, cried:

"Don't you know that plum-color will be all the rage next winter? Boys," and he pointed at the cloth, "boys, this corduroy will be walking down Fifth Avenoo, Noo York, before Christmas. — No, it will be driving there, because only the richest will be able to buy it!"

And the boys shouted with enthusiasm at the idea, for they knew Nate spoke the truth. The best American corduroys were made in their little town, and Nate's supporters had reason to boast about him. Once a week he went to the mill, received a bolt of cloth, and took it to his house to dye by means which he alone understood. Wonderful colors were made in the dye-room at the mill, strong and brilliant, or deep and solid, of all the standard shades. They were Waters' work, and so well did he make them that he was known far and wide in the trade, and had been tempted to

go elsewhere for larger wages. But Nate alone knew the secrets of the nuts and roots, leaves and bark, which he gathered in the woods, and which he mixed and steeped in his little house to make the subtle hues which never came from any other hands than his.

“How do you do it, Nate?” he was often asked.

“Guesswork, guesswork,” he always answered.

Doubtless it was partly guesswork, but it was knowledge also, and working in his irregular fashion he produced shades of color which Waters with all his steadiness could never equal. No one could take Nate's place; the reputation of the mill depended partly upon him; and cloth which he had dyed, and marked with his special mark, sold at a double price in the city stores.

But far from priding himself on this, just now he was pleased with Tim, and with Arthur, too. “You'll do,” he cried, patting Arthur's back. “You're your father's son. And you,

Tim, will be a dyer some day, if only you 'll let me teach you."

Tim smiled up at him teasingly. "Mr. Waters says that your dyes are so good partly on account of your water. He could do better if he had it."

"Go along," retorted Nate. "Tell him his colors are so good because he gets in his water the rinsings of my dyes."

"Mightily thinned out when they reach the other brooks," said Tim, "but strong enough to spoil his. 'T is n't fair."

"There," said Nate, laughing, "I won't joke with you, for fear I'll get the worst of it. — But you other boys, you could n't guess the color, could you?"

"What were you reading?" asked Curly, anxious to change the subject. He succeeded, for Nate turned to his book with sudden interest.

"Say, Pelly," he asked, "do you mean that folks used to do as they do here? Fighting in that way, with spears and iron clothes?"

“Armor?” asked Pelham. “Certainly.”

“I swan!” said Nate. He took the book and showed a picture in which a knight, on horseback, was bearing another on the end of his spear. “‘How Sir Carados,’” he read, “‘bare Sir Ector clean out of his saddle.’ It’s funny language, and it’s funny doin’s. Those chaps seemed to do nothin’ but ride about country, lookin’ for some one to fight.”

“That’s about it,” said Arthur.

“Interestin’,” said Nate. “I s’pose you boys would like to try that?” He made the remark a question, and looked about the circle with his twinkling eyes.

“Oh, yes!” they cried in chorus.

“I thought so,” said Nate. “Then you boys like fightin’ just for its own sake?” They made no answer, and he went on: “It seems to be a law of nature, but I never saw how it should master Christian men.”

“It ought n’t!” cried most of the boys, promptly.

“It seems to me,” philosophized Nate, “that

if those fellers had n't been so safe in those iron overcoats, and so anxious to try them against somebody else, there would n't ha' been half so much fightin'. A man would dress himself up in a cast-iron stove, and go out lookin' for trouble, — and when a man's lookin' for trouble, just like a dog, he's likely to find it, or make it. Hey?"

They agreed with him, as he looked from one to the other.

"An' right here in this quiet town," Nate pursued, still looking in turn in the faces of the boys, "if there was a set of men always armed, *organized* (he emphasized the word), an' with a feelin' of honor all stirred up and lookin' for a *grievance* (again the emphasis) — why then we'd have trouble here pretty soon. Ain't that so?"

"Why, Nate," cried Arthur, "what are you thinking of? Nothing of the sort could happen here."

Lawrence and Pelham echoed his words, but on the faces of the workingmen's sons ap-

peared recognition of Nate's meaning. Duck Lanigan, Curly, even Tim, hesitated to speak, and then looked away.

"Ah," said Nate, shrewdly, "so there is n't any chance of that sort of thing here? Well, I'm glad to know it." He stooped over the trough, and began to regulate its flow of water. "You youngsters make yourselves to home about the place. I've got to stay right here and finish up this job."

Some of the boys remained to watch him, others roamed about the house and examined his belongings, while still others wandered out of doors. Pelham, who with native quickness had caught the meaning of Nate's words, drew Tim aside.

"What did Nate mean about organization, and grievances, and trouble?" he demanded.

"Oh, Pelly," said Tim, "it's what the new workman, Volger, has been talking about. He wants a union; lots of the men want it already. I heard some one say it will split the town from top to bottom."

“It won’t split us!” cried Pelham. “Will it, Tim?”

“Never,” Tim agreed, and there they declared to each other that, come what might, nothing that their elders might do should come between them.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE UNION

**A**LTHOUGH Pelham and Tim agreed that no labor disputes should break their unity, they were destined both to influence and be influenced by the troubles that were to come. It was the very day after the visit to Nate that the two lads sat in Mr. Dodd's office, busy in looking over the trade journals whose pictures and news-items interested these two as much as the tales which form the ordinary boy's ordinary reading. For Pelham and Tim were little manufacturers already, and knew the parts of the big machines as most boys know the parts of their bicycles. They had not loitered in the engine-room for nothing, they had not in vain spent hours among the looms, and while to them some of the matter in the trade journals

was nothing but a jumble of words, it was surprising how much the boys understood. On this morning the two had been seated so long and so quietly behind Mr. Dodd, in one chair, in the corner by the window, that he forgot all about them. So when three of the men came asking leave to speak with their employer, Mr. Dodd asked their errand without thought that there were, just behind him, two little pitchers with very big ears.

The men were Volger, Patrick Cudahy, and Rip McCook. They said they had come "from the men."

"Well," asked Mr. Dodd, "and what can I do for the men?" Though he spoke more quietly than usual, Pelham was instantly struck by his tone, recognizing from it that his father was intent and alert. He gave Tim a nudge, and from that time on the two kept peeping at the men over the top of the paper.

Rip was about to speak in answer to Mr. Dodd, but Volger stopped him by a gesture, and turned to Cudahy, as if to ask him to

speaking. "It's this way, sir," said Cudahy, clearing his throat. "Mr. Volger here, he's given us some new ideas about ourselves, — very good ideas, we think them." He stopped to consider what he should say next.

"I am sure they are very good indeed," said Mr. Dodd, to fill the pause.

"You bet," said Rip, emphatically.

"Now," went on Cudahy, not very much pleased at Rip's assistance, "there's talk of forming a union among the workmen. Some of us are not sure it's needed. We've always got along without trouble; I think we always will. I —"

"But some of us think differently," Rip put in.

"Not about getting along without trouble?" asked Mr. Dodd, turning to him at once.

"Oh, no, sir!" exclaimed Rip, hastily, seeing where his tongue had led him.

"I guess," said Cudahy, turning upon him, "I guess ye'd better leave me speak, my lad. You forget your manners. — Mr. Dodd, the

poor boy has only this in his head, that something new is something fine, and all the younger men think the same. So we three have come, as standin' for different opinions among us, to ask if you have any objection to our forming a union here."

"None at all," said Mr. Dodd, heartily. "In fact I regard unions as often being very good things. There have been times when I have found it difficult to get an expression of opinion from the men upon changes that I desired to make. At such times a union would be very helpful to us both."

"Then," asked Cudahy, "we can just go ahead and form our union, sir?"

"Certainly, so far as I am concerned," answered Mr. Dodd. "And any grievance that you have, just bring to me."

"We will that," said Rip, emphatically.

"And any improvements you wish to suggest, we can talk over at any time."

"Certainly," said Rip.

"And I hope we can between us make





things better here," finished Mr. Dodd, still pleasantly, although at Rip's remarks his eyes had begun to sparkle.

"I hope we can," was what that young gentleman said now, at which last rudeness Cudahy turned upon him and said with much emphasis:

"It's time for us to be going," and with a hand on Rip's shoulder he started him toward the door. But Mr. Dodd spoke again, and they paused to listen.

"I trust you will consider," he said, "that there are parts of the business which you have never had to do with, and which — pardon me if I speak frankly — you do not understand. So that, if ever I have to hold a different opinion from yours, remember that you are not really in a position to judge all my motives. I have tried to be a fair employer, and to pay the men a just proportion of my own profits."

"We all know that, sir," said Cudahy, heartily. "Leastways," he added, with a side

glance at Rip, "all of us know it that are old enough to think."

"That is a point which I was aiming at," said Mr. Dodd, "and I should like to say, through you three, one last word to the men before you form the union. We may some day have differences of opinion. If we do, remember that there are among you some who are too young to consider the real consequences of your acts, and some who have nothing at stake here whatever, so that they are little injured by anything that happens to the rest of you. Should any difference arise, I trust you will remember that those who counsel strong measures are usually those who suffer least from them. It is your wives who suffer most in any labor trouble."

"Or the children, sir," said Cudahy, "and as I have a wife and children at home, I'll tell the men what you say. And I thank you for saying it, with your words strengthened all the time by the sight of your boy sitting there behind your back."

“Pelly!” cried Mr. Dodd, starting and turning about. “I had forgotten that you were there.”

“Never mind if they heard, sir,” said Cudahy. “But those two boys, one belonging to labor, sir, and one to capital, if you’ll pardon the freedom, should be a lesson to all of us four, for to see them sitting cheek by jowl as they are, ought to make us resolve that they’ll never sit in different chairs.”

“Hear, hear!” muttered Rip, savagely, glaring at the two lads whom he had so little cause to like, — or rather, to say it differently, whom he had given so little cause to like him. Mr. Dodd, whose warm glance had beamed approval at Cudahy’s sentiment, at once changed his expression.

“Have I answered your questions?” he asked formally.

“That you have, sir,” replied Cudahy, who was still the spokesman, though Rip had done so much to spoil the discussion, while Volger had said nothing at all. “That you have, and

I thank you heartily, and we 'll be goin', beggin' your pardon for any little rudenesses which we have n't known better than to show." And with this last thrust at Rip, the disgusted weaver marshalled his two companions out the door.

"Understand," said Mr. Dodd, turning to the two boys as soon as the three men were gone, "you are to say nothing of what you have heard, and next time let me know you are in the room."

The men's union was formed that night, and at the election of officers Volger (who gave the men to understand that this was due him as originator of the movement) was made both president and treasurer. Rip, having good schooling and being ready with both words and pen, would make a good secretary, so the younger ones declared, and they forthwith elected him to that office. Before the meeting was over, however, the elder men had plentifully snubbed Rip for his words to Mr. Dodd, giving him to understand that

respect to his employer would do him no harm. This Rip did not believe, for, having become secretary, he at once considered himself of importance. And yet the snubs cut him, and on their account he felt a grudge against all (except Volger) who had been in the office that morning, — against Mr. Dodd for his breeding, and Cudahy for his bluntness, and against Tim always, but against Pelham for special reasons.

For Rip disliked Pelham even more than Tim, remembering first his ducking in the river, and next the encounter at Waters' house, but most of all the keen remark of Pelly's in the mill, regarding Rip's rights. The story of this last had spread rapidly through the town, and Rip had winced at many a reference to it. It was: "How about those other looms, Rip?" or "Come into all your rights yet?" — little flings not only from the older men, but even from the girls and boys. Every fling brought its grin from the auditors, even from Rip's own friends, and Rip supposed

that Pelham had been busy telling the boys; whereas the story had needed but one telling from Cudahy in order to spread rapidly everywhere. In fact Pelham, when questioned if he were the author of the excellent jest, would neither deny nor acknowledge it, but said "Huh!" in the way he had, as if the matter did not interest him.

But with Rip it rankled, and the sight of Pelham always caused him to grit his teeth. Pelham was so unconcerned, and always so successful against Rip, that the latter declared, to Johnny Bragin and other kindred spirits, that he would "get square." Nevertheless, while Tim kept out of Rip's way, Pelham continued to saunter in his neighborhood whenever he chose, until Rip's friends began to inquire when the revenge was to be taken. And one day in the mill one of the men, pointing out the window, said to him, "Here's your chance to give him back his ducking."

Rip looked, and saw Pelham sitting above the mill-race, his feet hanging over its edge.

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Down the wide channel the water was rushing to turn the great old-fashioned wheel which drove half the machinery in the mill, but though the stream was nearly four feet deep Pelham sat, with his back to the mill, as unconcernedly as if a fall would not mean danger or death. Rip looked for a moment, and then, his face darkening, he said:

“ I ’ll give him a scare.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SLUICEWAY

“**D**ON’T you be foolish, now,” warned Cudahy, but Rip paid no attention. He stopped his looms, went out of the room, and ran downstairs into the great yard, through the middle of which the race flowed. Across the race was the smaller building, in which were the cutting, dyeing, and finishing rooms. No one else was in the yard but Pelham, who turned as Rip came from the mill, and saw him, but turned at once away again. “Durn him!” thought Rip.

Walking softly, he came behind Pelham, and then, with a sudden rough grip on the boy’s shoulder, pretended to push him into the stream. But Pelham was not frightened, made no resistance, and as soon as the hand was removed he simply brushed his shoulder

carefully. A laugh from the windows behind him made Rip redden with anger.

“Think you ’re too fine for me to touch, do you?” he demanded.

The boy merely looked up at Rip and made no answer. The men laughed again, and others, hearing, came to the windows to look and listen. Pelham looked again at the swift water at his feet, rushing with scarcely a ripple to turn the great wheel not fifty feet away. The bottom and sides of the race were slippery with slime, the force of the current was great: it would be a bad place, Pelham reflected, for Rip to really push him in.

“Won’t talk?” demanded Rip, growing angry. “And yet you ’ll speak quick enough when it comes to telling stories about me.”

“Nope,” said Pelly, looking straight ahead of him.

He certainly was irritating, yet the whole trouble sprang from Rip, who now, angered by the boy’s coolness and by the titters from behind, had no further idea than to make

Pelham acknowledge his faults. The fact that the men were beginning to jeer, and that Nate had come around the corner on his way to the office, dragging on a little buckboard his bolt of freshly dyed cloth, only made Rip the more determined to assert himself.

“You have n’t told stories about me?” he demanded.

“Nope,” said Pelham again. He knew that he was but provoking Rip the more, yet could not bring himself to speak more civilly to such a fellow.

“Oh, you little liar!” cried Rip.

Pelham made one movement as if to turn, and his face flushed red. Never before had he been called a liar, and for a moment his blood boiled. Yet he managed to control himself, and knowing the most forcible retort, once more sat silent, his back to Rip. McCook grew furious.

“I’ve a mind to throw you in!” he cried, bending over Pelly, and again seizing his shoulder.

It was an unfortunate movement, for just then Pelly, realizing Rip's anger, saw how dangerous was his own situation, and began to turn in order to climb to his feet and walk away. His position was, therefore, for one moment less secure, and in that moment Rip, touching him, threw him from his balance. Pelham, as he slipped, seized the only support near at hand, Rip himself, who when Pelham slipped from under his hand was also uncertain of his balance. When Pelly clutched his knees Rip fell forward, Pelham fell back, and together they plunged into the water. Slipping, sliding, down the sloping race the stream began to drive them, toward the great wheel.

Of all who saw them only two knew what to do. Nate left his buckboard, rushed to the edge of the race, threw himself on the ground, and leaned far over, with one hand seizing an iron stanchion, while with the other he reached for Pelly. He caught the boy's arm, and though Rip was clutching the little fellow desperately, and the water was strong, Nate

held the pair. In the meantime Waters, through the dye-room window, shouted to the weavers across the sluice, "Shut the sluice-gate! Shut it!"

The sluice-gate was not far from them; if one of the men had leaped from the window, run a little way up stream, and loosed a rope, the whole affair would have been ended in a moment. Instead, the men, not hearing, turned away from the windows and rushed for the stairs. It would be a full minute before they could reach Nate.

Waters looked around in despair. He was on the ground-floor of the dye-house, but across the stream from both Nate and the rope. Besides, the door was on the opposite side of the building, it was a long way round, and the window (since the secrets of the dye-room were among the most valuable of the mill) was barred. But seeing an axe lying there at his feet, he snatched it up, demolished the window in two blows, and hurling the axe aside, seized the bars in his

hands. Out of the corner of his eye he saw that Nate was still holding the two in the sluiceway; then with all the strength of his body he threw himself on the bars, to force them apart.

Meanwhile Nate held to Pelly, in spite of the strain, and raised the lad's head from the water. Pelham, gasping, looked up at Nate, then down at Rip, who now shifted himself to a better hold, and tried to struggle upward to the boy's shoulders. Pelly, looking up again, saw that though Nate held grimly, his lips were white: the great weight and the pressure of the water were almost tearing him apart.

"You'd better let go," said Pelly.

"If that cuss would n't struggle!" was all Nate answered.

But Rip, ever thinking of the great wheel turning so mightily and so near, did struggle, in his panic climbing higher and higher toward safety, and with every move racking Nate's body.

“Well, then, consarn ye,” gasped Nate, “climb up over us, and git out!”

Yet Rip could not even do that, for the water was too much for him; it would not let him get a footing, and when once he had his clutch on Pelham's shoulders he could go no higher. But still he struggled, and every move jerked Nate's arms terribly.

“Don't, Rip, don't!” called Pelham, but Rip, even if he heard, was too frightened to heed. “Then Nate, let go!” commanded Pelly.

“If you go, I go!” answered Nate through his teeth. “—And I guess I'll go,” he added.

But then the relief came. At the dye-house Waters, with one tremendous thrust, had forced the bars apart, hurled himself out the window, leaped the sluice, and loosed the rope. The sluice-gate fell, the water lost force and volume, and the great wheel began to go slower. From Pelly's feet the last of the flood slipped away, and in an instant the

danger was past. Rip relaxed his hold of Pelham, and Nate, releasing the boy's arm, for a moment tried to pull himself up. But the last ounce of his strength was gone; he turned white beneath his tan, and came tumbling down into the race. Men came running from the mill, and pulled all three from the slimy channel.

Some set Pelham on his feet and demanded how he felt, some leaned over Nate as he lay panting on the ground, and some crowded about Rip, who was evidently the least exhausted of the three, and inquired how he was.

"I'm not hurt," said Rip, beginning to squeeze the water from his clothes.

"Then I wish ye were!" said Cudahy, shouldering his way through Rip's friends, and thrusting his face disagreeably near Rip's own. "For of all the wicked carelessness —"

"It was an accident!" cried Rip, backing away. "Warn't it, Pelly?"

Pelham looked at him soberly. "If you want to call it so," he said.

"I guess," gasped Nate, without looking up, "that it certainly was n't intentional that we got out. Leastways all three of us."

"Are you all right, Nate?" asked Pelly.

"All right," he answered, beginning to sit up.

"And so am I," quoth Rip, with a swagger.

"Hmf!" grunted Nate. "Took precious good care ye should be!" The older men cast at Rip glances of disgust.

And now Bob Dodd came pushing through the circle. "I guess all 's right, men," he said, after a brief glance at each of the chiefs in the recent excitement. "You can go back to your work." But he fixed his blue eye, glowing with an unusual fire, upon Rip. "You stay here, McCook. I want to have a word with you." The men dispersed, although they longed to stay and listen.

"How does it happen," demanded Bob as soon as the last of the others was out of hear-

ing, "that you left your work to come out here?"

Rip looked sulkily at the ground. "I — I don't remember."

"And how did you and my brother get into the sluice?"

"We — we just fell in. It was an accident."

"An accident? Did n't you lay your hand on him?"

"Never!" cried Rip, seeing his danger even while he felt he could scarcely lie himself out of it. "I never touched him!"

"Did he touch you, Pelham?" asked Bob.

Pelham looked at Bob with a mixture of shrewdness and carelessness. "Call it an accident," he said. Bob, looking at him, saw that he never would get a different answer from his brother. And Nate added:

"Yes, call it an accident. You don't expect Rip intended to take a bath, Mr. Bob?"

Pelly snickered at the thrust, and Rip, although as yet hardly out of danger, flushed with anger. But Bob still frowned. "I'm not

going to inquire into this too closely," he said, "since you all escaped from death. But, McCook, you know you had no business to leave your looms. Go home and dry yourself, and lose a day's pay." Rip, looking up to remonstrate, saw a dangerous gleam in his young employer's eye, and said nothing. "Thank your stars you got off so well," added Bob. "Now go!" And Rip went.

"Pelly," said Bob, putting his hand affectionately on his brother's shoulder, "go home as fast as you can. Mother must see you before any one tells her of this, or she will be frightened. — And Nate, you come in and see my father. No," as Nate hung back, "in you go! He will have something to say to you." So Nate went reluctantly to face a quarter-hour of thanks and praise, and to parry as well as he could all questions concerning Rip.

"I don't know what he meant to do," Nate insisted. "You don't suppose he would hurt the boy, do you? It was just a case of bully-

ing, it seems to me.” And as a case of bullying Mr. Dodd accepted it, thanking Heaven — and Nate — that all turned out so well. Then he sent for Waters.

Waters was found ruefully contemplating the wreck of the window, and his first words to Mr. Dodd were of the damage he had done. “But I just could n’t help it, Mr. Dodd. You know you made those window-frames and bars specially stout, so that the dye-room should n’t be entered, and — and I just *had* to smash out!”

“My dear man,” said Mr. Dodd, with one hand on Waters’ shoulder, “if you had smashed every window in the mills, if you had destroyed every dollar I own, all I could do would be to thank you for saving my boy’s life. I shall never forget this of you, Waters, nor of Nate, either.”

“Well,” said the sturdy Englishman, facing Nate, “if you don’t know much of the science of dyeing, at least you came near showing the rest of us how you could die.”

Nate, who saw that the other was trying to turn the whole matter into a pun, laughed loudly, although with some confusion, and the rest joined him. Then Nate and Waters grew red at the first mention of any reward, and said, in Nate's words, that "they'd rather charge it up to good-will." And so the friendly conference ended.

When the two dyers came out into the mill-yard they separated with a feeling of kindness. In the meanwhile the noon bell had just rung, and all the men were there. Many of them were standing by the stanchion which Nate had clasped when he seized Pelly, and were explaining in a dozen ways just how it all happened. A group was at the dye-room window, examining the bars which Waters had thrust aside, and Cudahy, who was there, was loud in his astonishment.

"We tried to put them back in shape," he cried to the dyer. "There were four of us, two on each bar. Niver a bit could we

budge them. Hivens, Wathers, what an arm ye must have!”

“I could n’t budge them now if I should try all day,” Waters answered. “There’s a difference between hot and cold, you understand, Cudahy.”

“But the iron has n’t been hot,” one of the men protested.

“Whist, man, he means the iron of his spirit, don’t you see,” explained Cudahy. “And Wathers, man, ye must have been white-hot at that minute.”

Meanwhile, where Nate went he found in his way a group of the younger men, and among them Rip McCook, clothed again and (as his customary swagger showed) quite in his right mind. Seeing Nate, Rip turned to speak with him, at the same time saying to the group of his cronies, “Here he is.”

It was not unnatural for Nate to expect thanks from Rip, whose life he had undoubtedly saved. But the idea of Rip’s thanks was

not pleasing. "What is it?" Nate asked, halting unwillingly.

"Well," answered Rip, with importance, "us fellers wants to know how soon you're going to join our union."

"Hmpf!" grunted Nate. Unpleasant as gratitude from Rip would have been, this self-assertion was still more disgusting. "So your union's running now, is it?"

"Yes, it's running," replied Rip, "and the rule is, that all workers at the mill shall join."

"That's easily settled, then," said Nate. "I'm not a worker at the mill."

He turned to go away. "Hold on!" cried Rip. "The dyers have something to say about this. They won't work with you unless you join."

"They don't work with me now," returned Nate over his shoulder, but halting.

"Suppose the weavers won't make your stuff any more," went on Rip. "Suppose the finishers won't finish it?"

"All the same to me," said Nate.

“You’re likely to shut down this mill for six months,” warned Rip.

“I’ve got six months’ work before me,” said Nate, “thinnin’ out the hardwood on my southern slope. I can begin any time.”

Rip saw that he was getting no advantage.

“Look here,” he insisted, “will you join this union, or won’t you?”

Nate looked at him in contempt. “I won’t join,” he answered, “anything that you’ve got to do with.” And leaving them all standing there, he went his way.

Bob Dodd, passing that way after a few minutes, found Rip declaiming to a knot of the men. “An’ it’s not to be stood,” Bob heard, “that a berry-pickin’, two-tub dyer should n’t join our union.”

“McCook,” said Bob, “may I have a word with you?” And Rip, when he came close to Bob, saw that his eye was flashing as before.

“I could n’t help hearing what you said,” Bob began, “and I can’t help saying this to

you. If there ever was a man who should say nothing against Nate, you are that man!"

Rip, in confusion, could only mumble that he was thinking of principle.

"You were n't thinking this morning of the principle of sticking to your work," said Bob. "It strikes me you're not consistent. Remember that that was not the first time you left your place. I think it's about time that I hinted to you that a four-loom man who can't keep at work is not of much value to his employer." He turned and went away.

"He threatened me!" said Rip excitedly to his fellows. "He threatened to discharge me. I call you fellers to remember that the union stands by a man that's discharged!"

"We'll stand by you, Rip," cried his mates unanimously.

## CHAPTER XIV

### NON-UNION LABOR

MR. DODD'S first act after the escape of Pelham in the sluice was to call his carpenter and order the long trough to be covered. On the very next day men were at work there, laying a firm plank floor across the sluice, and along its whole hundred feet of length. It was a relief to his mind, so Mr. Dodd declared, to have that danger trap closed forever; it was, besides, a convenience to be able to cross the sluice at any point, instead of having to go around. As for the boys, they took great delight in the work, as in anything new, and ran and jumped upon the floor to hear the hollow echo from below.

It was at this time that care, of which Tim had known so much more than a boy should,

first began to show itself in Pelham's life. It occurred to him that for a week he and Tim had played nearly alone, and he asked the natural question, "Where are all the boys?"

"Oh," answered Tim, "they're somewhere, I guess."

"But," persisted Pelham, following out his line of thought, "I have n't seen much of any of them lately. We have n't had a ball-game for a week."

"No," said Tim. "You see, it's all this union business. Our crowd has formed a union of its own."

"Oh!" exclaimed Pelham. "Leaving us out, I suppose."

By "us" he meant the employer's sons, and Tim understood him so, — understood, too, the haughty tone which sprang naturally from Pelham's lips. "We — we did n't mean to leave you out," he said.

"Only you did n't ask us," added Pelly.

"Why, how could we?" Tim asked. "We're the workingmen's sons. And your

father's owner, and Mr. Blair's superintendent, and Mr. Spott's cashier, so how could we ask you and Arthur and Lawrence and Biff?"

"Well," said Pelham, "we can have a union of our own, only —" he turned to Tim with tears starting from his eyes, "only it spoils everything, that's all I can say."

"And I say so, too!" cried Tim, distressed at Pelly's emotion. "I joined, of course, when the fellows asked me, but I don't like it, and I'm sorry there's a union here at the mill, and I wish they were n't talking against Nate."

"Talking against Nate!" exclaimed Pelly. "What have they to do with Nate, I'd like to know?"

"Well, it's this way," said Tim, and proceeded to tell a tale of which the following is a brief account.

That morning, as Tim and his guardian sat at breakfast, Bridget, wearing her apron, as usual, had stalked up to the door, and leaning

against the jamb, had looked in on them. "Mighty neat here," was at first her only answer to their greetings.

"We have to be neat," explained Waters, "because we have to do the cleaning."

"Huh!" said Bridget, "it'd take more than that to make some folks neat." And thus reminded of the "men-folks" she had left behind, she jerked her thumb over her shoulder in the direction of home. "They're comin' to see you," she said to Waters, — "Volger and Rip and some others."

"Why does n't your father come?" asked Waters, with scorn, and when Bridget explained that McCook had refused, on the ground that "he would n't never darken Waters' door," the dyer asked, "What are they coming for?"

"To tell you they want you to ask Nate to join the union."

"Me to ask that?" cried the amazed dyer.

"Well, they're coming," persisted Bridget, "and I came to say that they said they

could n't insist on it without you, as you 're the master-dyer. So I thought if you knew, you 'd hold firm."

"I 'll hold firm enough!" declared Waters, wagging his head; and on that assurance Bridget abruptly departed, to be replaced in half an hour by several of the younger men, with Volger and Rip at their head. After some preliminaries, in which Waters sat grimly silent and would not help them to come to the point, they managed to explain that they thought it right that Nate should join the union.

"Oh, ye do?" was all Waters said.

"And," went on Volger, "we thought we 'd see what you 'd say to that."

"Oh, if ye want such an amatoor coming in with us professionals," said Waters, "I don't care."

"But we wanted you to lead the demand," said Volger.

"What," asked Waters with a fine sneer, and in his pride in the mill-work completely

undervaluing Nate's rare masterpieces, "ye think I see any need of associatin' with that Yankee in his shanty on the hill? Well, then, I don't."

"But he's taking work from honest union labor," explained Volger.

"Is he?" asked Waters. "I don't see how his sixty to seventy bolts a year make the slightest difference to our eighteen thousand."

"All the same," urged Volger, retiring upon general principles, "we think he ought to be made to join."

"All the same, I don't," retorted Waters. "His little workshop is too small a thing for us to notice. I never think of it myself." Then, seeing on the faces of his visitors, as well as feeling in his own mind, knowledge of the fact that Nate's little workshop was the one thorn in his own side, the dyer abruptly demanded, "Are you a deputation from the union?"

"No," admitted Volger.

"Well, then," said Waters, with a wave of

his hand toward the door, a gesture which might have been accidental, but which looked singularly as if it were intended, "I don't see the use of discussing this at all." And this was all the little self-appointed committee could get out of him.

"First rate!" said Pelham, when Tim had told him so much, "that question won't bother us any more. Will it?" he asked, seeing an expression of doubt cross Tim's face.

"I'm not so sure," Tim said. "I think Mr. Waters made them cross, and then Rip's in a nasty temper. He hates Mr. Waters, and he hates me. It only made him madder to see us together. He kept looking round the room as if he'd like to burn it, and us; he didn't look me in the face at all, but he looked *at* me, and I know it just made him furious to see me where he couldn't get at me, and dressed in good clothes. I think he won't let Nate alone, if only to spite us. — And look over there!"

Pelham looked where Tim pointed, and saw

Rip, Volger, and a half-dozen of the younger men leaving the mill-yard together, heading for the country and Nate's woods. It was noon of a Saturday, and the men doubtless had the rest of the day off. "They're going to Nate's!" exclaimed Pelly. In the next breath he added, "Let's warn him!"

"Let's!" echoed Tim, and so they went. They left the mill-yard by its other end, took a short cut through the fields, and were soon well ahead of the men. They went with great eagerness, forgetting entirely that Tim was of the working class and Pelham of the employers', but going, with a friend's instinct, to warn their friend.

They found Nate as before, seated in his shed, and turning the handle of his home-made "jigger," a simple but clever imitation of the elaborate machines at the mill. He heard their story without a word, merely wrinkling his homely face as he listened.

"Too bad them fellers must be cuttin' up such shines," he said when they had finished.

“Some of them is young and foolish, and the rest is old and foolish, 'n so the combination 's poor.”

“What will you do?” asked the two boys together.

“Wal,” returned Nate, “I don't see 's I c'n do anythin'. Jes' consider the case. I live here all soul alone, earn my livin', pay my taxes, and don't callate to interfere with nobody. My earnin' 's just about enough for me, 'n a little against a rainy day. A pack of fellers comes along and says to me, ‘Pay us fifty cents a month!’ But why should I?”

“Unions are in style,” said Pelly.

“Not my style,” answered Nate. “Now I hear voices comin'. You two just sit still and say nothin', and let me manage the whole of it.”

The men, arriving, crowded together into the shed, with Rip aggressively ahead. He looked surprised at seeing the boys, whom he had left at the mill, and glared at them suspiciously; but they were innocently talking

together. Nate spoke up with an irony which his visitors understood.

“Come right along in! Don’t stop to knock.” Since the men had not knocked at all, some of them looked a bit awkward, but they continued to come in, until the whole of them, seven in all, were in the shed. Then Nate, still winding his roll of corduroy into and out of the tub of dye, stood up and faced them.

“What can I do for ye?” asked he.

Rip, who was nearest, did not wait even for Volger to speak first. “You can guess what we’re here for,” he said with a sneer, “even if those boys have n’t told you already.”

“Never mind them boys,” said Nate. “But since you and Mr. Volger have come here to see me, I could guess you’ve come about your union.”

“We hope you’ll say ‘our’ union,” put in Volger, endeavoring to quiet Rip. But Rip had taken the bit between his teeth.

“We warned you the other day,” he said.

“Now we’ve come to give you your last chance. Will you join us?”

Nate looked humorously at him. “Kind of a money-or-your-life affair, ain’t it?” he asked.

“It is n’t your money we want,” said Rip, contemptuously. “Let me tell you that our union has joined the amalgamated brotherhood of mill-workers, and their treasury is ours whenever we go on strike. We’ll get strike pay.”

Nate whistled. “That’s easy!” he exclaimed. “Only I don’t see the common-sense of it. The brotherhood will pay the expenses of any strike that any fool may start, when you’ve not paid a month’s dues into its treasury? That is a brotherhood! Now if I could rightly believe I could get my week’s pay for doing nothing, I don’t know but I’d join ye.”

Though his face was serious, he was laughing at them, and the men saw it. “Don’t you be funny, now,” said one of them. Then Volger spoke.

“ I see you don’t believe that, but it ’s true. It *is* a true brotherhood, helping the working-man to right his wrongs, and not thinking of the cost to itself.”

“ Wal,” said Nate, “ I ain’t got no wrongs to right, an’ so I don’t need no help. An’ it don’t strike me as businesslike, that brotherhood of yours. Either its system ain’t what you say, or it ’ll be bankrupt within a year. Why, I can see you fellers are just spoiling for a strike, thinkin’ you ’ll get your pay for nothin’. Who ’s your treasurer? ”

“ I,” said Volger.

“ What do you do with the money of the union? ” asked Nate.

“ I keep it,” answered Volger, but his face darkened.

“ In your pocket, I suppose,” said Nate. “ Have you got any receipts to show for the money you pay the brotherhood? ”

“ They don’t give receipts,” answered Volger, his face darker still.

“ We don’t want any receipts,” said Rip.

“Don’t ye?” asked Nate. “Well, then, if ye want to put your money into the hands of a man who’s been in the town not over ’n’ above six weeks, never askin’ him for an accountin’, then ye can do it, but I won’t.”

“Just as you please,” said Volger, with an appearance of carelessness, shrugging his shoulders.

But he went near the tub of dye, instead of away from it, and Rip, as he too stepped forward, did it in a hurried manner, as if to cover Volger’s movement. There was a little bustle among the others also, and they pressed nearer Nate, although some of them watched Volger furtively. Rip, trying to hold Nate’s eye, tried also to speak, but did not at first know what to say. “You — you —” he said in his haste. “You’d better think twice.”

“Once is enough for me,” answered Nate. “Look out you don’t get into my dye, *Mister* Volger. — Ah, ye would, would ye?”

For there was a movement of Volger’s hand, almost imperceptible, and a flash of yellow

that leaped from him toward the tub of dye. There was no splash, but on the green surface of the dye appeared a yellow powder, floating, but almost immediately beginning to dissolve in the dark liquid. A moment, and it would sink, and the dye would be spoiled. But Nate was too quick.

## CHAPTER XV

### NATE'S GREEN DYE

“**Y**E would?” Nate snarled again. With a long arm he snatched a gourd, a flat dish, that hung by the machine, and with an instant movement skimmed the whole powder from the dye. He flung the dishful of liquid upon Volger, skimmed again, and yet again, and two more dishfuls of the dye went spattering among his visitors. Then he leaned over his beloved machine, and looked carefully down into the tub.

“Saved, by Jingo!” he ejaculated, and looked upon the mill-men with relief. They had leaped back as far as the wall would allow, were brushing and wiping the dye from their clothes, and now began complaining angrily. But Volger, who had received

most of the dye, said nothing, and Rip, who had got some in his face, was busy cleaning his mouth from the evil-tasting stuff. Nate looked at Volger.

“A city trick, I take it?” he asked.

“The boys did that,” said Volger.

“They did! I saw ’em!” sputtered Rip.

“Oh, they did, did they?” asked Nate; and his eye, hitherto showing but a contemptuous humor, began to gleam with a different light. “Perhaps I did it myself, absent-minded like! And perhaps you’d be mighty sorry to see spoiled seventy dollars’ wuth of dress-goods! Now, I’d jest like all of ye to get out of my house!”

“We won’t go!” cried Rip, recovering his power of expression. “We’ll have satisfaction first.”

“I’ll give it ye!” retorted Nate, and he again dipped the gourd-dish into the dye. “I’ll give ye a full quart measure of satisfaction this minute, if ye say.” Rip backed away as the angry dyer held the dish threateningly,

and the man who was nearest the door took occasion to slip out.

“One gone!” cried Nate. “Now out with the rest of ye! Or will ye all have satisfaction?” He took a step nearer, and with one accord his visitors huddled out.

“You’ve spoiled our clothes!” they cried from a safe distance. “You’ll pay for this!”

“I’ve set my mark on ye,” Nate exulted. “So long’s ye wear them clothes any one in the town’ll know ye. Nate Downing’s fast dyes are pretty well known, I fancy.”

“We’ll dye you black and blue!” one of them called, shaking his fist.

“Green’s wuss,” retorted Nate. “I’ve marked ye for greenhorns, every last one of ye.” And with this exchange of witticisms they parted.

“Boys,” said Nate, re-entering the shed, “get along home now. You’ve seen what happened; tell the truth about it. Only first—I’m much obliged.” He shook the hand

of each, and soon the boys were speeding back to the town.

The work was always irregular on a Saturday afternoon. The weavers and spinners usually got out at noon. The cutters and dyers always finished up such pieces as they had on hand, cleaned up, and went away as soon as they had done. The men who had been to Nate's, returning from their errand, at once scattered among their mates, to tell with much exaggeration how the union had been defied. They showed their green-spotted clothes and their stained hands, and exhorted the union to resent Nate's conduct.

Of them Rip was fiercest of all, — so fierce that he forgot his own ridiculous appearance. He could not wash off the green that blotched his jaw; but after rubbing it as long as he could with soap and water, he went hot-foot to the mill, to spread the doctrine of rebellion. The dyers had not yet left, but Rip knew better than to venture into Waters' domain. To the cutting-room he went, and there found

a half-dozen of the men, hastening to finish their work.

The older men were not anxious to stop and talk with Rip; of the younger, there was only one whom he thought he could impress. This was Wat Mayhew, a bright lad, smaller than Rip, and of no great strength of character, but very clever with his hands in that department of work where a true eye and wrist could bring good wages and much responsibility. For of all the processes in the making of corduroy, except the dyeing, the cutting is the most important.

The strip of corduroy as it comes from the loom bears no resemblance to the finished product. Its surface is ribbed indeed, but the ribs are flat, being in reality long sheaves of crosswise thread which must be cut open from end to end. The threads, released by the cutting, are brushed upright, and make the true ribs. The cutting, though occasionally done by machine, is still chiefly handwork, the cutter using an instrument which much resembles a

fencing foil, having a wooden handle, a long square blade, and a point as sharp as a needle, with six inches of cutting edge which is literally razor-keen. When once the cloth is stretched, the point of the tool is inserted in a sheaf of threads, the blade is run along it with a full sweep of the arm, and at each thrust five feet of the rib is cut open. When all the parallel ribs of one section of the cloth have been cut, a new section is begun, until by many hundred strokes the whole is completed. And each one of the strokes must be exactly like every one of the others, — let the wrist turn ever so little sidewise, and one part of the finished rib will be higher than the rest; or let the point go wrong, and the fabric is badly gashed. There is much at stake, therefore, in the cutting-room, where a moment of carelessness can spoil a whole bolt of good corduroy.

Rip went up to Mayhew, who was in the middle of a bolt, ruefully considering that the whole afternoon would scarcely see his work

finished. But as his eyes fell on Rip he had to pause to laugh at the green splotched face.

“Rip, you ’re a sight!” he cried.

“I came to show it to you,” explained Rip, loudly, while the other men, hearing Mayhew’s words, looked, and began to grin.

“That’s the way Nate treats the delegates of the union!”

“He does?” cried the others, and at once most of them left their work to come near and listen. Rip, well pleased, displayed his face with the air of a martyr, and told his tale with effective details, forgetting to mention the yellow powder which had been thrown into the tub. It delighted him to see the interest with which the men listened to the story, and at the end he finished triumphantly:

“Now, what do you say about it?”

“We’ll have to do something,” they declared.

“We’ll have him into the union or else out of work,” cried Rip. “The spinners won’t spin thread for him, nor the weavers weave

it, nor you fellers cut it, nor the finishers finish it. I tell you, we'll rip up his business just as I rip up this cloth." And taking up the cutter which Mayhew had laid down, in elation Rip set its point to the cloth to make the thrust which all boys knew and practised in imagination, but which so few of them had ever really tried.

"Don't!" cried Mayhew, springing toward him. But Rip held him off with one hand, while he kept the tool at the cloth with the other, and Mayhew drew away at once, afraid lest by pushing Rip he should bring about the very damage which he dreaded.

"Please don't!" he begged, clasping his hands.

"You'd better not!" warned two of the older men.

For a moment Rip hesitated, but then came strolling into the room the two inseparables, Tim and Pelly, whose faculty of appearing before Rip at the wrong moment was never better shown than now. For though they

continued to walk along, Pelly's eye was fixed on Rip, in understanding of the whole situation, and watching to see what Rip would do. Rip was exasperated, became defiant, and forgot his good impulse.

"I will!" he exclaimed, and pushed the cutter along the cloth.

"Oh!" groaned Mayhew, in anguish.

"Now you've done it!" said one of the others.

Rip's hasty thrust had gone entirely wrong, slashing from one rib through into another, and then another, finally piercing the back of the cloth itself and cutting a slit a foot long. Rip saw it with dismay, but in the presence of the little boys he would not show his fright.

"That's nothin'!" he said. But he put the tool down upon the cloth, and turned as if to go.

And there stood Bob Dodd! He had come into the room, saw the group at the bench, heard the men's words, and at once perceived what had happened. He strode to the cloth,

took one look at the injury, and then turned to Rip.

“ You did this, McCook? ” he asked.

Rip could not deny it. “ I did,” he muttered.

“ You know you have no business here,” said Bob. Rip nodded, his eyes on the floor.

“ You have no business to touch another man’s tool; you were entirely wrong to try to cut this cloth. You knew it’s against the rules? ”

“ No,” answered Rip, half-heartedly. He knew it very well.

“ Then you should have,” said Bob. “ The rules have been posted in every room of the mills these ten years. Were you paid off at noon? ”

“ Yes,” answered Rip.

“ Then we’ve done with you,” said Bob.

“ What do you mean? ” cried Rip.

“ You’re discharged,” answered Bob. “ I warned you only a little while ago. You need n’t come back on Monday.”

“ Discharged? Me discharged? ” demanded Rip, angrily.

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“ You are,” answered Bob, coolly. “ I think that ’s plain enough for you to understand.”

“ The union won’t have it!” shouted Rip, his face, where it was not green, turning very red. “ I ’m secretary, do you know that? ”

“ Even if you ’re the whole thing,” replied Bob, “ you are discharged. Run away, McCook.”

Rip did not run, but he walked away. “ You wait!” he said over his shoulder.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE STRIKE

**T**HE affair at Nate's house and the discharge of Rip created at the mill a situation much like that which comes about when a boy with a gun sees a bird to shoot at. The boy has no thought of misery to the bird, or even that perhaps the gun will kick and lame his own shoulder. But he itches to shoot, and he shoots.

The men were like the boy, the union was their gun, and Nate and Rip were their excuse for shooting, — their Grievance. They did not consider that if they called a strike misery would result, at least, they did not expect it to come to them. The story of Nate's defiance of the union, and his use of his dye, flew about among them, minus the

item of the yellow powder. Likewise the story of Rip's discharge, as told by the victim of it, went from house to house. The men had Sunday to think it over in, if they wanted to think. But they did not want to think, and so called a meeting that very night. There Volger related, in flowery words, the grievances of the union. He proposed that Mr. Dodd be required to take Rip back again and to discharge Nate, and the vote was about to be taken. Then Waters rose to speak.

Waters could be blunt at times, as an Englishman can, and just now he was disgusted with his mates. "Do you know," he asked, "that you're rushing into this just like boys? You don't see where you're going. You have n't heard the whole story of what happened at Nate's house; you don't know all about McCook's discharge. You're a set of noodles!"

This was not the way in which to persuade the men. They roared at him to sit down,

but he held his ground and shouted back above their noise.

“Ask about the yellow powder that was thrown into Nate’s dye!” cried Waters. “Who threw that in?”

“It was them two boys!” screamed Rip.

“Mighty likely!” sneered Waters. “And now just consider whether that four-loom weaver had any business in the cutting-room spoiling good corduroy. Any man that comes into my place and dabbles in my dye is going to get into trouble, I can tell all of ’e.”

“It was only a little cut,” shouted Rip again. “The bolt was n’t spoiled. I was discharged out of spite!”

Waters turned to the more sensible of the men. “I warn ’e that Mr. Dodd won’t consider this, not one minute. How much have we in our treasury to stand a strike? Not two months’ dues! Are ye ready to go into your savings for that young ripper’s sake?” And he pointed to Rip.

The married men looked thoughtful, but

the others were in control of the meeting. "We want our rights!" they clamored. "We stick to our principles!"

And Volger shouted: "Mr. Dodd won't let us go, or if he does he'll call us back in less than a week."

"You don't know him," replied Waters with hearty scorn. "But I tell all of 'e here and now, I won't strike for such reasons, nor will I disgrace the union for the sake of a man that disgraces himself." And with that he went out of the hall; but he went alone, for the men, like the boy with his gun, were still pleased with their new weapon. They voted to send a committee to Mr. Dodd with their demands, agreeing that in case of his refusal they would strike. Blind haste was preparing trouble for them.

On Sunday some of the older men, somewhat doubting, came to Waters where he sat smoking on his steps, with Tim at his side. "What is all this about the yellow powder at Nate's house?" they asked.

He told them briefly. "That is not what the others say," said Cudahy, in doubt.

"Then believe the others," answered Waters, gruffly. "Believe Volger or Rip McCook. Don't ask for the word of a boy that never told a lie," and he pointed to Tim, "nor of me, that ye ought to know after all these years. But take the word of a McCook, and follow the lead of a man ye never saw till a few weeks ago." And not another word would he say on the subject.

Monday morning came, and all the men went to the mill. Till nine o'clock the work proceeded, but when the hour came for Mr. Dodd to be at his desk, a deputation of the men went to him, with Volger at their head. They made upon him two demands: first, that he should give no more work to Nate unless he would join the union; second, that Rip should be taken back. Mr. Dodd, and Bob his son, sat silent while the men were having their say. Then Mr. Dodd inquired:

“And what if I don’t do as you ask?”

“Then we’ll stop work,” said Volger.

“All of you?” asked Mr. Dodd.

“All but Waters,” answered the spokesman, with some contempt.

“Well, then,” began Mr. Dodd after a moment’s thought, “I will answer you. First as to young McCook —”

“May I say a word about him?” interrupted Bob, and having received his father’s consent, he faced the men. “As to Rip McCook,” he said, “I’ve told my father that if he takes him back, I’ll go!”

Young as Bob Dodd was, he had the reputation of knowing his own mind, and the men looked at each other, startled. Mr. Dodd smiled.

“You see,” he said to the men, “I can hardly send away my own son. Besides which, McCook was justly discharged, and I promise you that he will never again work at this mill. Next, as to my asking Nate to join your union: I will not do it. So long

as he wants to work for me, he shall, even if you all leave me."

"Then we'll all leave," said Volger, promptly.

"Very well," answered Mr. Dodd, quietly. "Will you carry a message from me to the men? Tell them from me that any man who wishes to stay shall be given work, but to those that go out I will give no more work for a month."

"You need n't trouble about that," answered Volger. "They won't stay."

"I shall close the mills for a month for repairs," went on Mr. Dodd as if Volger had not spoken. "Most of my orders are filled, and I shall be very glad of a chance to clean house. Good-day."

"Good-day, sir," answered the men in a doubting chorus, and they straggled from the office, feeling uncertain of the future. Like boys, they had threatened more than they meant, and were surprised to be taken at their word. And a month off! A strike of

a few days they could bear, especially if it brought success; but, except Volger, there was not a man there who was willing to lose a month's wages for the sake of Nate and of Rip McCook. Yet, still like boys, they looked bold and carried it through. The word was sent round through the buildings, and the men left their work. Thus quietly was brought about the strike which a week before would have seemed absurd.

Waters alone remained at his post. "All out!" called his men to him, but he stuck to his mixing.

"All fools out!" he answered. "Away with 'e all. Ye'll come back again presently, I'm thinking."

And Mr. Dodd found him alone at his post. "Thank you, Waters," said his employer. "This is the second time you've done me a great service. Of all the men, I need you most. For I can't lose my reputation for always filling my contracts."

"Is there work to do?" asked Waters.

“If we can dye and finish eighty bolts in ten days,” said Mr. Dodd, “that will complete the last of my summer contracts.”

“Eighty bolts!” cried Waters. “It can’t be done, sir!”

“It must be done,” answered Mr. Dodd.

“What help can you give me, then?” Waters asked.

“There is myself,” said Mr. Dodd. “You need n’t stare, Waters. I’ve worked in a mill before now. There’s Bob, of course, and Arthur can help in some ways. Mr. Blair, Mr. Spotts, and their two sons. That makes three boys, I know, but they are all clever.”

“You forget your son Pelham,” said Waters.

“He’s too small,” replied Mr. Dodd.

“Beggin’ your pardon, sir, too small he is not, nor is my own little Tim, and with these we can do the work, perhaps, so far as the unskilled labor goes. No offence meant to you or Mr. Bob, but I’ve got to have one

skilled dyer. Yet I know where I can get one."

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Dodd.

"Nate," answered Waters.

Mr. Dodd was surprised. He knew well that, deep down in his heart, Waters was envious of the skill of the other dyer. Mr. Dodd had seen Waters examine Nate's work, trying, and failing, to condemn it honestly. The mill-worker had had to be content to sneer at Nate's small establishment, to say that Nate's colors were "all well enough," and to call him the "farmer dyer." But always Waters, in spite of his sturdy satisfaction in his own work, had felt a painful doubt whether, after all, Nate were not the artist and he himself the mere artisan. Having this feeling, professional jealousy would be the most natural thing in the world—but now he proved himself superior to that.

Mr. Dodd, in great pleasure, said heartily: "That is very generous of you!"

Waters flushed. "I'm not sayin' that he

may n't make a mess here, perhaps, spoilin' a bolt or two, not knowin' the true way to work. But a dyer's a dyer, even if he's only a amatoor, and Nate's better than nothin'."

Mr. Dodd, as he turned away, hid a smile at Waters' words. "Well," the employer said, "I'll send for Nate to come, and we'll get to work on a new basis this afternoon. I'll put the boys on the payroll, Waters, and we'll see what a crippled mill can do."

Out in the yard, an hour later, he found Pelham and Tim, who with boys' instincts for excitement were prowling round for news. But Tim was half in tears. "What is it, my boy?" asked Mr. Dodd.

"The fellers called me a scab," explained Tim. "I joined their union, but I won't join their strike; not so long as my guardian won't."

"But the boys can't strike!" exclaimed Mr. Dodd.

"They *play* they're striking," explained

Pelly, in some contempt at his father's slowness. "It's all the same."

"So it is," said Mr. Dodd. "Well, will you two boys play you're working for me? I want to send some one with a message to Nate."

"They've picketed Nate," Pelham informed him. "They know he's got some cloth to bring back, and they don't intend he shall, nor that you shall send for it, either."

"Picketed!" cried Mr. Dodd, frowning. "Can you boys get to the house?"

"Of course!" they cried, and Tim brightened at the idea of something to do.

"Go to him, then," directed Mr. Dodd. "Slip up to the house without being seen, tell Nate I want him to help here at the mill for ten days or so, and to pack up and wait. I'll send the carriage in about an hour, and you can all come down together."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE PICKET

“**A**LL right, sir!” the two boys shouted in delight; and after capering for a moment to show how pleased they were, off they went at a run to get to Nate’s as soon as possible.

“There can’t be danger,” mused Mr. Dodd as he watched them. “The men have lost their heads, but no workman of mine would hurt either of those boys.”

He forgot Rip McCook. As soon as the strike was declared, Rip plunged into the detail of it. He was ready with plans for boycotting the families of the employers, for picketing the mill, for doing anything and everything in approved city style. With several of his companions he went to the butcher’s, and unfolded to him a plan of stopping Mr.

Dodd's supplies of meat. The butcher looked scornful.

"Cut off my best customer, shall I?" he demanded. "And why, I want to know? Because you fellows have been fools enough to quarrel with your bread and butter? You're the ones I'll cut off first of all, and I make the rule from this minute, that every one of you that buys at my store pays cash until he's at work again."

So, within half an hour of the beginning of the strike, Rip's plan for a boycott was knocked on the head. Some of the men grumbled with him as they sat on his doorstep talking the matter over. Loud among them was a man named Fahey, whose denunciation of the butcher almost equalled Rip's.

"Tell ye what," said Bridget, leaning from the doorway. "Tell ye what, Mr. Fahey, if you want to begin a boycott, it's easy enough. Your daughter is second girl at Mrs. Blair's. Tell her to stop work and come home."

“That’s the idea!” cried Rip, for once approving of Bridget’s words. “Call your daughter home.”

“No, no!” cried Fahey in a panic. “Her earnings are all we’ve got to live on, now. What for shall I take all the bread out of my own mouth, I’d like to know? And my wife waitin’ to scold me as soon as I go home, too!”

Biddy looked at Rip. “Boycottin’s no good,” she said shrewdly, and he realized that with the suggestion about Fahey’s daughter she had led him into a trap. “Try picketin’ the mill.”

But when Rip adopted this suggestion, even Volger opposed it. “Why should we do that?” he asked. “Mr. Dodd’s not looking for more workmen yet. When he does it will be time for us to picket. Don’t you worry, Rip. It will all be over in a few days.”

But Rip had to picket something, and Nate occurred to him. “There he is up there on

his hill," he declared, "with that bolt of green cloth that he's not yet brought back. Are we goin' to let him take that back to the mill, I'd like to know?" And Nate's green dye, still visible on Rip's face after two days, and still showing brilliantly upon the clothes of his companions, emphasized the situation.

"Oh, let him do what he wants with his cloth," said Cudahy. But the others would not have it so. They declared that Nate and his green cloth should stay upon the hillside, and a dozen of them started at once to surround Nate's house and prevent his escape.

Tim and Pelly had heard of this, and saw the picket start on its way. They flew with the news to the mill, and told Waters, who, after a few questions, showed the weakness of the enemy. "There they go," he declared, "without a bit of food, and without blankets to pass the night. That's the way the whole strike has been conducted, and you boys can guess just how it will end."

So now, inspirited by Waters, and sent by

Mr. Dodd, Pelly and Tim were making for the woods, to find their way to Nate's beleaguered stronghold. They dove into the woods at the thickest point, and never left the shelter of the trees until they arrived at the edge of the open land, wherein stood Nate's house. Then they looked for picketers.

Some of them were plainly visible on the slope below the house; the boys counted six of them. Two more were off to the left of the house, lolling under a bush; two were at the right. But where were the remaining two, of whom one was Rip?

"They must have gone back to the town," whispered impetuous Pelly.

"They are about here somewhere," replied more cautious Tim. "They're poking round."

"Then if they are," argued Pelly, "we can't stay here long, or perhaps they'll come upon us. We must sneak down to the house. There is that big bush; let's just crawl to that. Then we can run across the open ground."

In a straight line between the boys and the

house was a large lilac clump, growing up thickly from the ground and giving good cover for any one desiring to hide behind it. Between it and the boys grew grass and scattered bushes of sweet fern, not tall enough for a man to hide in, but excellent for the boys. Through this, then, they started to make their way. If once they reached the lilac clump they would be nearer the house than any of the men, and a dash to the shed would be simple. As they crawled through the sweet fern, however, Pelly nudged Tim.

“Excited?” he asked.

“No,” answered Tim. “Those fellows are n’t watching at all. It’s too easy to sneak past them!”

And after a few more wriggles, simple enough for them who had often played Indians in the woods, they neared the lilac bush. Then Tim raised his head and sniffed. “Tobacco smoke, and the men are too far away for theirs to come here.”

“Get to the bush,” answered Pelly.

One last snake-like passage, twenty feet and more, and they reached the bush. Then both boys sniffed again. The tobacco smell was stronger. And then a voice came clearly from the other side of the bush.

“What’s that?” It was Johnny Bragin’s voice.

“Nothin’! What yer scared of?” answered Rip McCook.

The little boys’ hearts began furiously beating. There was Rip within four feet of them, and only the bush between! They pressed themselves close to the ground, put their hands over their mouths, and controlling their breathing as well as they might, listened to what would be said next. If Johnny should get up to investigate, or Rip himself come, they would be caught. Then came Rip’s voice again, and they breathed more freely.

“Quit bein’ scared, I tell yer! Nothin’’s comin’ here, nothin’ at all.”

“But I heard something,” said Johnny, timidly. “I know I did this time.”

“ Heard your granny! ” replied the unsympathetic Rip. “ Now you shut up, Johnny, and let me finish what I was sayin’. I tell you, this strike will bring old Dodd to his knees.”

“ Will it? ” asked Johnny, not with any great enthusiasm. He was not able to picture very clearly Mr. Dodd upon his knees. But Rip could.

“ We ’ll get him down, I tell yer,” he went on. “ He ’s had his way in this town ever since he came, — brought money, built mills, gave the library, helps the poor. That ’s all so that people shall give him what he wants. Gets himself made selectman and magistrate, so he can interfere everywhere. Wants the town to spend money on roads, to keep two policemen ’stead of one, and makes a lot of trouble whenever there ’s scarlet fever or anythin’ of that sort in the town, regulatin’ the way people live. None of his business! ”

Pelly opened his eyes wide. He had never heard his father so spoken of before. Rip, in his career, went on.

“When the schools were built he gave the grounds,” he said. “And why? So that the town would have to put up bigger buildin’s than they could on the old lot. And old Dodd made us spend lots and lots of money on plumbin’ — so the children should n’t be sick, he said. But I tell you he’s got a brother in the plumbin’ business, and old Dodd made a peck of money out of the deal.”

“Did he?” asked gaping Johnny.

“It’s a lie!” called Pelham, loudly.

“Who’s that?” cried Rip, scrambling to his feet.

He was startled by the sudden voice, and stood there pale and shaking when Pelly marched round and confronted him. “It’s a lie!” said Pelly again, into Rip’s teeth. “I have n’t got any uncle in the plumbing business, and my father’s the last man to make money in such a way!”

“Oh!” said Rip. He looked for others to follow Pelham, but saw only Tim, and his

look of alarm changed to one of relief, and then of spite.

“Who’s with you?” he asked, drawing a step nearer Pelly.

“Run, Pelly!” shrilled Tim, knowing Rip too well. At the instant Tim spoke, Rip leaped for Pelly.

And missed. Pelham ducked, twisted, slipped from the arms that would have held him, and then at Tim’s side he raced for the house. Rip sprawled into the grass, but leaped up again with a stone in his hand; and Nate, roused by the boys’ voices, came to the door to see the flying figures, and Rip behind them just balancing to throw.

“Quit that!” Nate shouted. But Rip threw. The stone was heavy, but Rip was angry, and his throw was good. Yet it is seldom enough that stones go home, and this one whizzed past Pelham’s head only to thump against the shed. In a moment more the boys were in safety.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### GIVING THE SLIP

“**V**ICIOUS, that was!” said Nate, looking from the stone to the man who threw it. “Want some more green dye?” he called to Rip, and receiving only a scowl in answer Nate went again into the shed.

“Will you tell me what’s up?” he asked of the boys. “What’s them fellers’ business on my land?”

“Strike! You’re picketed!” they panted.

“Thought as much,” he said. “Think to keep me in my own house, do they?” And he laughed heartily. “Set down, boys, and get your breath, while I finish this.”

They saw that he had been tying up his bolt of corduroy into a tight roll. First he put around it paper, and then burlap, and

then a rubber blanket, cording it carefully. And as he worked he talked.

“Saw them fellers first about an hour ago, — came up here and began lollin’ about. Recognized some of them by the green spots on their clothes. Volger got enough, I guess. Leastways, I don’t see him about. They ain’t said nothin’ to me, nor I to them, but I guessed pretty well what they was here for. And now what brings you?”

They told him, and he puckered up his mouth into a whistle. “Why, I ain’t never worked in a mill. Don’t know how it would seem.”

“But you ’ll come to oblige father?” asked Pelham.

“I ’ll come to oblige your father, and to disoblige McCook,” answered Nate. “Oh, yes, if there’s to be any fun, I’ll be there. But how’s it to be done, even when the carriage comes? I judge these fellers don’t mean we shall get away. Look at them there consultin’!”

The picketers had gathered below the house, and were talking earnestly together. "You see," said Nate, "they block the only way out. If it was just a matter of gettin' ourselves away, boys, we could slip out the back door this minute, and over the side hill, and down through the woods, and they'd never lay hands on us. But there's this eighty-pound bundle," and he kicked his bolt of cloth, "which won't let us run fast, I reckon. It's got to go with us, and it's got to go on the buckboard."

He wheeled out of a corner the four-wheeled cart, home-made like everything of his, on which he always brought his cloth to the mill. It was made like a buckboard, — very strong, but light. "It'll hold all three of us," said Nate as he lashed the corduroy upon it. "The grass has been cut, too, lately. If I could get those fellers out of the way for just two minutes, I'd show them a trick or two."

"What grass has been cut?" asked Pelly.  
"And what if it has?"

“The grass in front,” answered Nate. “Clear way to the road. I’ll show ye what I mean if ever I get a chance.”

The boys looked down along the open space, from which the hay had only just been cleared away, and saw that Nate’s house seemed set at the upper end of a long lawn. Two hundred yards down the woods began, but all the way to them was an unbroken stretch of “mowing,” and just before the woods was a stone fence. In the fence was an opening leading, as the boys knew, to the hill road which ran down to the town, and by which Nate always brought his supplies. As the boys looked, suddenly they saw something moving on the road.

“There’s the carriage!” said Pelham.

“The men see it,” added Tim.

At the opening of the fence appeared Mr. Dodd’s carriage, and the coachman drove it into the field, intending to go straight up to the house. Shouting and waving their hands, the strikers ran to meet it, and the first of

them caught the horse by the rein. Others ran beside the coachman and shook their fists, and in another moment the carriage began to turn about.

“He’s turning back!” cried Tim and Pelham.

“Now’s our chance, boys!” cried Nate suddenly. “Quick now, help me!”

He drew the buckboard to the door, ran it out, and locked the door behind him. “Yell once,” he said, “and run with me!” They all raised their voices in one yell, in which Nate’s note sounded triumphant. Then with surprising speed he dragged the little buckboard across the front of the house and toward the woods, the very way he had said he could not go. “What is he about?” asked the boys of themselves; but they ran with him, and looking at the picketers, saw that they had left the coachman and were again running uphill. Nate had some fifty yards to go before he reached the woods, and the men, instead of running straight up toward him, all ran to

head him off. In among the bushes Nate dragged the buckboard, the boys following. To the men below it looked as if Nate hoped to get away by running straight through the woods.

But when once inside the screen of bushes, and before he reached the trees, Nate turned abruptly uphill, and dragged the buckboard away from house, carriage, and picketers, parallel with the edge of the mowed land. The boys, running with him, and pushing whenever they could, were still more astonished. "This is never the way to get to the town," they thought. But Nate hurried all the faster, uphill and so close to the mowed land that at any moment he could dodge between bushes into the open again. The clearing curved, and he ran with the curve of it, until after a minute he stopped. Looking between the bushes he could look down along the whole length of the "mowing." Nate slapped his thigh.

"Done!" he exclaimed.

The boys peered out into the open. Not a man was in sight! Every one of them had rushed into the woods, in the hope to stop the fugitives.

In an instant more Nate had dragged the buckboard out upon the short grass. Then tilting its handles up against the front, he leaped aboard, seized the handles, and pointed the wheels downhill. "Now for a coast!" he cried. "Start her, boys, and jump aboard!"

They lost no time in marvelling, but took the idea and pushed. The buckboard started, and gathered headway at once. Tim sprang upon the bundle of corduroy, Pelham leaped on the end of the buckboard, and in a moment the coast had begun. The hill was steep; the wheels of the buckboard were large, and stopped for no hollows in the ground. Quickly they sped past the house; faster they went and faster, until they went swishing down through the "mowing" at a speed which would have left any pursuer far behind.



“ ‘Golly!’ said Tim, and caught his breath.” *Page 219.*



“Golly!” said Tim, and caught his breath.

“Gee!” echoed Pelly, and held on.

“Don’t make no noise!” cautioned Nate.

“We’ll make the carriage yit!”

Then first they saw the whole of his plan, and in another minute witnessed the success of it. The coachman, turning to look back, saw them coming, and halted in the road. Nate, steering with perfect hand and eye, guided the buckboard straight down the field and into the rough road. The machine tilted, veered, and crashed into the bushes. Pelham was swept from his place, and Tim on top of him; Nate was sent sprawling among some little birches, and they came to a dead stop. With one impulse they scrambled to their feet and turned to see how close their pursuers were.

But there were no pursuers! Across the clearing, in the farther woods, they heard distant calling and crashes in the undergrowth, but not a man was in the open. So quickly and silently had the coast been made that not one of the strikers had seen it.

“Quick!” called the coachman.

Nate drew his knife, and in a moment had cut the lashings which held the corduroy. Seizing the light buckboard, he flung it farther into the bushes. “Stay there till I want ye!” he said. “Come, boys!” With the corduroy in his arms, and the boys following, he ran to the carriage, they all sprang in, and in less than a minute, as they clattered down the steep road, the woods had swallowed them up. Rip and his companions still searched among the underbrush, but not a glimpse did they catch of Nate and the two boys.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE WORK AT THE MILL

**I**T was nearly an hour before Rip McCook and his companions discovered how they had been tricked. After vainly and confusedly beating the bushes, they at last thought of looking for wheel marks, and so came finally upon the track across the field. In great disgust they returned to their homes, to learn that Nate, the boys, and the bolt of cloth had all safely arrived at the mill.

Some of the men sympathized with the picketers, but some jeered, and the rest were silent. The strikers' women folk had already expressed their opinion of the strike, from which they would suffer most; and the married men were already uncomfortable. It did no good to tell their wives that the strike "would only last a day or two." The wives

were not so sure of that; and besides, the strike should never have been begun.

But at the mill, even on that first afternoon, everything was cheerful, for work was going busily forward. When Nate reported at the office, Mr. Dodd sent him over to the dyeing-room, and crossing above the sluice where so recently his life had been risked, Nate presented himself at Waters' door. There he beheld the master-dyer busy among boxes and barrels of dye, weighing, ladling, and mixing. Waters paused to look at the figure in the doorway, and beheld Nate, who entered awkwardly.

"Seems ye need help," said Nate.

Waters grunted. "I need a man that knows yellow from red. I suppose you'll do."

Nate understood him perfectly, and chuckled. "My yellows may n't be your yellows, nor even my reds your reds. Howsoever, they are yellows, and they are reds. When shall I go to work?"

"Now," answered Waters. "There's the

dye-stuff, there's the cloth, and there's a jigger. Choose your own colors, and Pelham will help you. Tim's to help me. The boss and the rest will dry and finish." Nate took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves, and went to work.

The strikers at first scoffed at the workers. There were only six grown men and five boys at work in the mill; the spinning and weaving mill was silent and empty; no cutting was done; and only the dye-rooms and the finishing-rooms were still busy, with not a third of their former force. The big wheel was stopped, most of the fires in the engine-room were drawn, and only two boilers were needed to turn the few machines which were still in use. "They can't do much!" laughed the strikers. They failed to realize that Mr. Dodd did not want to do much. Little by little he could dye his bolts, and though the work might go faster, it went better than he had expected.

Two days after the strike began, while the

men were still waiting to be asked back to work, the news flew about that out-of-town workmen had arrived at the mill. "We ought to have picketed!" cried the strikers, and sought out the stage-driver, to find how many men had come. Only four, he told them, and they were reassured. Four workmen could not do much. Then the word was brought, by those who had been spying about the mill, that the newcomers were not mill-workers at all, but were taking down the great water-wheel.

Taking down the great wheel! That wheel supplied so much of the power in the mill that nothing could be done without it. What was Mr. Dodd about? Next the men learned that the wheel was not only taken down; it was being broken up. What could Mr. Dodd be planning? The men's curiosity was too much for them, and they waylaid the new men on their way to lunch.

"What are you doing up at the mill?" asked Rip, as usual at the front.

“We ’re taking out the old wheel and going to put in a turbine,” said the leader of the mechanics. “Mr. Dodd says he ’s been wanting one for years.”

A turbine, some of the men knew, was a style of water-wheel which gave much more power. “How long will it take?” asked one of the married men, uncomfortable at the thought of what his wife would say to this piece of news.

“How long?” asked the mechanic. “Three weeks, I should say. Safe to call it a month.”

A month! So that was what Mr. Dodd had meant by his warning! Ordinary repairs could not take long, but without power the mill could not run, and a month’s idleness, a month without pay, suddenly stared the men in the face. Some of them, feeling almost sick, turned away blindly.

But Rip persisted. “See here,” he said to the foreman of the mechanics, “you fellers ought n’t to be working here when we ’re on strike.”

“We have nothin’ to do with your strike, young feller,” answered the foreman, not over-kindly. “Our union has nothin’ to do with yours.”

“You ought to declare a sympathetic strike,” urged Rip.

“Go along!” answered the city man. “You’re countrymen here, or you’d never have gone into a strike without good preparation.” And he and his men passed on.

With him passed all the spirit, all the confidence, of the strikers. A month without work! Even the younger men looked glum at that; and as for the older, they thought of their wives and children, and called themselves fools. What had they been thinking of?

That evening, as Volger and the McCooks sat on the steps of their house, a number of the older men came to see them. Cudahy was at their head. “See here, Volger,” he said abruptly, “it strikes me we’re in trouble.”

“What do you mean?” Volger asked.

“The mill’s shut down for a month, that’s

what I mean," said Cudahy. "You said this strike would last only a week."

"Don't you worry about that water-wheel, if that's on your mind," said Volger. "The turbine's over at the railroad station, only seven miles, and I've heard it's to be carted over here to-morrow. How do you know but in less than a week it will be in place at the mill, and the looms running again? I tell you old Dodd will knuckle under."

"How about strike-pay from the union?" asked Cudahy.

"Strike-pay never begins for a month," answered Volger. "That's in the rules."

"How about help from the brotherhood, then?" demanded Cudahy.

"That will come all right," Volger assured him.

"Well, anyway," said Cudahy, sturdily, "I want you to see that it comes, and that our strike-pay comes too. We're beginning to think we've been hasty about this; and be-

sides, it's the perfect truth that we don't know anything about you."

Then Volger rose to his feet and delivered a speech. He could speak at any time, on any subject, with beautiful flowers of language. His feelings were hurt, he said, at his friend Cudahy's insinuations. True, he, Volger, was new in the town, but that should mean nothing against him. Had he not his work at stake? Had he not a reputation to lose? Would they cast him out because of mere suspicion? And having formed the union, laboring over it night and day, was he to be treated thus? Well, then, he could but leave them, go away elsewhere, and start life anew. He had supposed that, in this quiet valley, far removed from the selfishness of the city, he would be treated manly and openly. He was sadly disappointed. Did they wish him to resign?

Most of them were melted by this time, and even Cudahy was sulkily repentant. "Oh, come, Volger," he said, "I didn't

mean all that. We don't want you to resign."

Then Volger spoke again. It gave him courage, he said, to find he had misunderstood. Then he would continue to lead them, and would lead to victory. What was there against them? Over in the mill were Mr. Dodd and a few men and boys (and among them Nate, the cause of all the trouble), working for dear life to fill a contract. Was it possible that men unused to work, and boys like those boys, could ever accomplish anything? Why, they had a criminal among them !

"Who is that?" asked one of the men.

"Never you mind," answered Volger, darkly. "But I can tell you that while my own conscience is clear, and can swear that your suspicions are baseless, one man at least has come to this town to escape his own past. One man in this town has a guilty secret, one man fears to feel the hand of justice on his shoulder, one man is nefariously helping

our employers who should be behind prison bars.”

“It’s either Waters or Nate,” remarked Cudahy.

“It’s either Waters or Nate,” repeated Volger, solemnly. “I’m not saying which.”

That was the end of his speech-making, for the men went away wondering what he meant, and he was left to himself.

But he was not at ease. He did not feel so sure that the turbine would be in place and the strike at an end within a week. The men’s grumbling, and their hints that they had no security for the money that was in his hands, — how soon would these begin again, and how soon would the men demand to have the money handed over into their care? And it troubled him, — for some of the money was already spent!

Volger, coming to the town with a city man’s tales to turn the heads of the workmen, had succeeded well. He had formed a union, he had got its money in his hands, and

was held in much honor. The mistake he had made was in not opposing the idea of a strike. But he had brought the strike about partly because he believed it would succeed, partly because he had felt it difficult to abandon Rip McCook. The McCooks had taken him into their house and at once became intimate with him. Rip followed him devotedly; and Rip's discharge had seemed to Volger a chance to secure his absolute obedience. Volger had helped on the strike, therefore, counting confidently that within a week he could say to the men: "See, Mr. Dodd has begged our pardon, and now we own the town. Kindly remember that I'm the one you should thank!" And to Rip he could say: "But for me, Rip, you'd have to go to some other town to earn your living, and how would you like that?" As a general benefactor, Volger's position would then be secure.

But he had counted without Mr. Dodd. Pelham's father was a mild-spoken man, and Volger had never suspected him of having

courage. Now that things had turned out as they had, now that the mill-wheel was gone and the turbine not ready to take its place, Volger did not exactly like his own position. He had spent some of the money, and he could not restore it. The "brotherhood" was an invention of his own. If this were discovered, he would be in real trouble.

Rip, too, was uneasy, and presently came seeking Volger. "I don't feel quite right about this," said Rip. "Suppose the men should go back to work? All up with me, then, isn't it?"

"I'm afraid so," agreed Volger.

"Can't we make 'em mad with Mr. Dodd?" asked Rip. "Or can't we make him so mad with them that he won't take 'em back?"

"How?" asked Volger.

"Smashin' things at the mill, — on the quiet, you know, — or something of that sort."

Volger stared at his companion. His own specialty lay in persuasion, in wheedling men beyond their better judgment, blinding their

eyes and then picking their pockets. Rip, though younger, was far more quick to violence. The man that can throw stones at his younger brother is not going to hesitate at the destruction of property when under the influence of anger. "Smashin' things at the mill" would come natural to him.

So Volger stared at him. Quite in his usual fashion, the president of the union thought he saw a way to make Rip work for him. "Well," said Volger, slowly, "if you could manage to do some damage, without any one knowing who did it, then Mr. Dodd might be mad enough to turn us all off and send for men from the city. And the men would never stand that."

"But what could be done?" asked Rip.

"You know there's no watchman at the mill," said Volger. "He struck with the rest of us, and Mr. Dodd can't keep close watch. A man with a hammer let loose in the weaving-room, or among the mules, could spoil some

thousands worth of property in a mighty little time."

"Well, then," said Rip, looking him in the eye.

"Well, then," said Volger, turning his head away, "suppose you try it this evening?"

"Me? Smashin' machines, alone!" cried Rip, in his surprise speaking louder than necessary. "No, sir, you come with me."

"My dear Rip," answered Volger, who knew too much to do anything absolutely criminal, "this is the kind of a job that one man can best do alone. You know every foot of the ground, you know every inch of the mills. I would only bring you into danger."

"Of course, I know the way better than you," admitted Rip, weakly. And then Volger talked to him long and quietly and smoothly, until Rip agreed to go alone.

## CHAPTER XX

### IN THE CUTTING-ROOM

**H**ALF an hour later Bridget McCook appeared at the mill, and knocked at the door of the dye-room. "Who is there?" asked a voice.

"It's me, Biddy!" she answered. "Tim, let me in!"

But when she had been admitted she saw only Tim and Pelly, but no men at all. "Where's the men?" she demanded.

"All at father's house," answered Pelly, proudly. "We're night watchmen until nine o'clock. We take turns with the others."

"Oh, why did n't they leave a man!" cried Biddy, wringing her hands. "Before we know it half the looms will be spoiled. Rip planned to do it before darkness came, for he can't use a light. He carried a hammer;

he may be there now! What shall we do?"

"Let's all go over into the mill," proposed Pelham, boldly.

"He mustn't know I told on him," answered Biddy. "And he hates both you boys; he'd do you a hurt if you went alone."

The two boys looked at each other, and each saw the determination in the other's face. "We must go alone just the same, then," replied Pelham. "Biddy, you run and send here the first man you can trust. If you see no one, run to father's. We'll go over and try to scare Rip off. I know a way."

"Don't let him get at ye!" warned Biddy. "Awful threats he breathes against ye. I'll be as quick as I can." She slipped out the door, and the two boys, the one taking a wrench, the other a weight from the scales, which were the only weapons that lay handy, stole across to the mill in the early twilight. At its great black windows no face appeared,

and all its office was silent when Pelly, with his father's key, opened the door, and they stood there listening. They tiptoed inside. For a moment, while yet the door was open, they knew they could rush out; then Pelly closed the door softly, and they were shut up in the mill with Rip.

It was all dusky there, and silent; let them but open the further door of the office, and the whole great mill, in which the doors were never shut except in case of fire, would lie before them. Somewhere in the mill, or trying somewhere to get in, was Rip, whose hammer, used vigorously for but a few minutes, was able to ruin much of Mr. Dodd's property. They must stop him, but Tim wondered how.

"What shall we do?" he whispered to Pelly.

Pelly's plan was simplicity itself. "I want to turn on the lights," he said. "He won't dare do a thing if the mill is lighted; people could see him from outside. But the switch

is in the cutting-room, and we've got to go there. Ready?"

"Ready," answered Tim. In spite of himself his voice shook.

For the danger which hides itself in darkness is far greater than that which walks in the light. To enter the great gloomy mill, where behind any machine might be hiding the angry man who, baulked in his plan against property, might suddenly turn his hand against life,—to do this required all Tim's courage. Tim knew Rip better than any one else, had seen his eyes flash with cruel spite, and even hatred, and believed that in a moment of fury Rip would stop at nothing. Had he not thrown at Pelham that stone which, if it had hit, would have crippled for life? Pelham was daring and reckless; he took no second thought as he prepared to enter the mill. But Tim saw clearly all the consequences, and it took his whole courage to answer "Ready," and to follow his chum to the cutting-room door.

Very quietly Pelham opened it, quietly they passed in, and quietly the door was closed behind them. Two doors shut them off from safety, and there they were among the machines and the benches, in the dim light. They listened breathlessly, and there at the very first Tim thought he heard something near them.

It was some one breathing — no, it was not. Did anything stir in that corner? Pshaw, it was nothing! Tim backed against the wall, his nervous fears ready to raise against him a legion of spectres, his hair rising under his hat, and his mouth already opening for a scream. Then with a great effort he mastered himself. “Coward!” he told himself, and seeing Pelly take the first step, he followed.

All was silence, silence, silence as they tip-toed the length of the room. Through the windows Tim saw the lights of houses, and knew that, so close as across the mill-park, people were carelessly chatting, while he here,

with shaky grip, was clutching his scale-weight and searching the shadows for an enemy. Yet he saw nothing, and at last, at the end of the room, Pelham reached up and laid his hand upon the electric switch which controlled all the lights of the building, and which the boys, as a great privilege, were sometimes allowed to turn. All Tim's fears fell away from him, and he drew a long breath of relief. Pelham turned the switch.

Instantly the light sprang up, flashing from bulb to bulb, from room to room. For a moment the boys winked at its brilliance, as they looked at each other with delight. "Done!" exclaimed Pelham. "Now let's get out." They turned to go, and recoiled.

From beside a cutting-bench rose Rip and faced them. Scowling and blinking, enraged at the discovery, his face had never yet appeared so evil. He raised his hammer and threatened the boys. "Turn that light off, you little devil!"

All was open floor between them, and a

heavy machine was at the boys' backs; they were virtually shut up with Rip in a little triangular space. "Turn off that light," he repeated, "or I'll smash you!"

Tim looked about and saw that he could not escape except by passing Rip, and the space was narrow. But Pelly took no such notice of their situation. It was his character to face a danger without measuring it, just as it was Tim's to look first for the way out. Pelham, then, stepped boldly up to Rip.

"Get out of this, Rip McCook!" he ordered. "We've sent for my father, and he'll be here soon."

"Comin', is he?" snarled Rip. "Then I'll do some smashin' first, an' I'll begin with your head!"

He stepped forward, and Pelham stood fairly under the upraised hammer. The boy's face paled, but he still looked fearlessly into Rip's. "Don't you dare!" he said.

"Dare!" sneered Rip. "Dare!" He raised the hammer higher.

And then a long steel blade, its point gleaming in the light, came over Pelly's shoulder and pointed straight at Rip's breast. It pierced his clothes, and the point stopped against the skin.

"Stand still!" said Tim. Rip, his face now yellow, stood like a statue, with his arm upraised. "Get a cutter, Pelly," said Tim, and Pelly leaped for the wall. There in a rack were the cutters' tools, like a row of fencer's foils, and Pelham, seizing the nearest, came back to Tim's side with a rush, the point of his tool so hastily thrust out that it pierced Rip's skin.

"Ow!" he yelled.

"Drop the hammer, then," said Pelly. Rip dropped it. "How did you get in?" asked Pelly.

"Through the window," Rip answered sulkily.

"Then get out of it as quick as you can," directed Pelham. "Let him go, Tim." And both boys lowered the points of their weapons.

Color came again into Rip's face, and he put his hand to his side. "You've drawn the blood," he said. "I'll be even with you yet." He moved sullenly around the machines, toward the window.

Then he, too, leaped for the wall, and from another rack seized a cutting-tool. "Now," he said, turning about. "Now we'll see!"

But Pelham, smiling oddly, reached for a rope that dangled from the ceiling. "This is the fire-whistle," he said. "If I pull it, I'll have the whole town here in two minutes. You'd better get out."

Rip cast the cutter down on the floor in a rage. "Don't you tell I've been here," he commanded.

"I'll tell what I please," answered Pelham.

"If you do," threatened Rip, "there's twenty of us have taken oath to fire the mill, and fire your father's house, too. If you want your mother burnt out some fine night, you tell on me, that's all!"

For all his courage Pelham shuddered at

the threat, and Rip leered triumphantly as he turned to the window. He climbed out clumsily and dropped to the ground. But Pelham, taking courage, ran to the window and leaned out. "Rip," he called, "listen. There is n't any steam up. I could n't have blown the whistle. Understand?"

There was a snarl from the darkness, the whiz of a stone, and the window was shattered above their heads. But after their experience a broken window was nothing, and for very relief the two boys laughed together, until with a sudden catch of the breath Pelham remembered Rip's threat.

"Would he burn the house?" he asked Tim.

"He might," answered Tim, gloomily.

Then Mr. Dodd, and Bob, and Waters, and all the others, came bursting into the mill.

"Is all right?" asked Mr. Dodd, relieved when he saw the boys safe.

"All right," answered Pelham. "Somebody broke a pane of glass, that's all."

## CHAPTER XXI

### “ WATERMAN ”

“ **W**HAT’S wrong with Pelly and Tim, sir? ” asked Bob of his father on the following morning.

“ They must have seen Rip in the mill. We found them with cutting-tools in their hands, as if ready to fight, and a hammer was lying right there. But they won’t admit he was in the building.”

“ I don’t know,” answered Mr. Dodd. “ But I ’m not so sure I want to arrest Rip, anyway. It might look like persecution, and I don’t want to anger the men, because sooner or later they are bound to find him out themselves. And we can’t call his sister to testify against him, because we promised we would n’t. So we ’ll just let the matter drop.”

Up to noon of that day Rip McCook lived in fear of feeling the sheriff's hand on his shoulder, but then Volger said to him: "They can't mean to arrest you. That is lucky."

Rip began at once to swagger and boast. "I told 'em not to dare to tell on me. They'll let me alone." And taking courage, he began to ask Volger what should be done next.

"I'm not sure," answered Volger. "I think we'd better wait a while."

"But see here," argued Rip. "Do you see them working over at the mill, early and late, to get their dyeing finished? Are you going to leave them in peace? You said there was a criminal among them. Is he of use to them?"

"The greatest use," answered Volger.

"Then tell on him," urged Rip. "Get him arrested, and then he can't work for them any more. It is Nate?"

"It's Waters," said Volger.

Rip's eyes flashed. "I hate him worse than

Nate. Come, tell me about it, and we'll see what can be done.” And the two consulted for a while together.

In the meanwhile at the mill they had indeed been working early and late. From six o'clock in the morning till seven at night was not hard for Waters and Nate, nor even for Tim, but the desk-workers and their sons were not used to it. Yet with true spirit they rose to the crisis, and day after day worked sturdily and well. Steadily the pile of undyed cloth was growing smaller, and as steadily the pile of finished bolts was growing larger. Four days more at the present rate, and the contract work would be finished on time.

Bob Dodd was engineer, and with wrench and oil-can did dirty work all day. “How do you like it?” Pelly asked him one day with a grin.

“I tell you, Pelly,” answered his brother, “I would n't have missed it for anything. I've already found two ways for saving labor and money, and I'm working on a new idea

now, which may mean a good deal. This strike has been a good thing!"

And Mr. Dodd, who personally put the dyed bolts through the finishing process, had done the same as Bob. "Are you worried, dear, or only tired?" his wife asked him one night.

He looked up in surprise. "Neither," he answered. "I was just thinking hard. I have really worked out an idea, Mary, that will simplify the whole process and will save thousands in the year."

With Mr. Dodd worked Mr. Spotts and his son Biff. The drying of the dyed cloth was done by Mr. Blair, Lawrence his son, and Arthur Dodd, and they worked hard and well. For these boys, old enough to appreciate their responsibility, the labor was lightened by the deep interest they took in learning now the processes which they had expected would be denied them for years, and they delighted to be doers rather than mere lookers-on. Their feelings had besides been deeply

hurt by the behavior of the village boys, who had refused to speak to the employers' sons when they met them in the street.

“ But we 'll show them how to work! ” said Arthur, with determination. And he looked forward to the time when, the strike broken, the village boys would sue for peace again. He had been fond of them, — of Duck, and Curly, and the others; and all he wanted was for them to acknowledge a mistake, and to take up the old way of school, and play again.

But in the dye-room, though Tim and Pelham had the same wishes, they did not look forward so confidently to the future. Pelham had a dread that Rip would carry out his threat of burning the house, and he was too much troubled to think of reconciliation. Besides, Pelly was a haughty little soul, and just as he would order Rip McCook from the mill, so also would he turn away from his former friends, if he believed them to be in the wrong. He was able to play by himself,

and work by himself, without depending on the others.

But Tim had the hardest position of all. He came from the working-class, and that class had turned against him. To them Waters was a "scab," he himself was also a "scab," and the boys did not hesitate to call the word after him when he passed them in the street. Nothing hurts the workingman like that word. It means traitor, it means coward, it means self-seeker. The striker's feelings are so roused that he sees nothing but wrong in the man who will not strike, — sees no principle, no heroism, no self-sacrifice. Yet the workingman who raises his voice against a strike is brave; and the man who will not join a wrongful strike is more nearly a hero than the workman who, believing the strike to be wrong, nevertheless joins it for fear of what his comrades will say or do to him. There was here no dread of violence; but the flings of their former friends cut Waters, and cut Tim, very deeply.

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Therefore they worked together with a far different feeling from that which animated Nate and Pelham. The four worked in pairs, the boys pushing trucks, carrying water, and doing the simpler weighing and stirring; while the men managed the machines, and hung with wrinkled brows over the cloth as they passed it in and out of the dyes. But while Nate cracked jokes over his jigger, and Pelham laughed and chatted (for in spite of the hard work all this was but a lark to them), Waters was grimly silent, and Tim seldom smiled over their work.

And at home they were very serious. In the group of houses where the workingmen lived there was not one that was open to them; and of all the men and women, boys and girls, whom they met on the street, there was not one that would greet them. Some one would call "Scab" from a window as they passed; and from a group at a corner would come the same hateful word. On coming home they would find a stone on their steps, or a tin can,

or an old shoe, while for each such memento a dent in the door would show the energy with which the missile had been sent. As in old Concord town the patriots, whenever returning from shooting, would discharge their guns in the direction of the hill where dwelt Lee the Tory, so the strikers cast upon Waters' steps anything that they wanted to get rid of, little caring whether or not they damaged his door. On returning at night Waters and Tim would find these silent reminders of dislike, and would enter very seriously.

"It's hard on you, Tim," Waters said one day. "I'm getting along in years, and I learned long ago that man's a forgetful animal, and a selfish one, and a violent one, too, when he's roused. But it's a little early in life for thee to be learning it all."

"I don't care, if only I'm with you," answered Tim. "Rip and his father were selfish and violent enough for me, and I'd rather stick by you. Only it is a little hard

to know you're in the right and to be disliked for it."

Waters patted him on the shoulder. "There come times when only a few can see the truth, and it takes the rest a long time to come round. But for thee I'd be quite alone, and it's fine to have thee with me, Tim, my son."

"I wish I were your son, really," said Tim.

"You're getting to be," Waters responded. "Kinship couldn't draw us closer than this strike does. My boy that's dead has escaped much trouble; but I've saved 'ee from some, and I'll save 'ee from more, if only we stick together."

"We will stick together, whatever comes!" cried Tim. And "Whatever comes!" Waters had echoed solemnly.

Something was coming. That day Volger, speaking at Rip's urging, had begun to drop hints about the criminal who was helping Mr. Dodd. The New York police records of about eleven years ago could tell about him, and

what he was wanted for. "It's not for me to tell all about it," said Volger, "but it's a serious matter."

"Oh, speak up!" said Cudahy, who heard the talk. "Give the man a name, and tell us the crime, too. Nodding and hinting won't do any good." Some of Volger's special supporters were inclined to resent Cudahy's rough words, but he defended himself. "If it's a serious matter, as Volger says, let's treat it seriously, and not beat about the bush. We're not children. Who was it, anyway. Nate?"

"It was Waters," answered Rip, triumphantly.

"Waters!" repeated Cudahy, somewhat shocked. "Why, he's the most respectable man in town."

"Respectable!" cried Volger. "Yes, so does crime disguise itself."

"He's a scab!" cried the listeners.

"So he is," agreed Cudahy, who for a moment had been thinking of Waters as his

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old friend. “ So he is. But give his crime a name. Was it stealing? ”

“ No,” answered Volger, with the air of saying, Worse!

“ Arson? Assault and battery? ” asked Cudahy.

“ All I ’ll tell you is this,” said Volger. “ When he left New York city in a hurry he was running for his life.”

“ His life! ” cried Cudahy, completely taken aback. “ Running for his life? That means he committed murder! ”

“ Make your own conclusions,” said Volger, about to move away.

“ Hold on! ” cried Cudahy. “ You ’ve said either too much or too little. Was Waters wanted for murder, or was he not? Tell me that! ”

“ He was! ” answered Volger, triumphantly, and a low “ Oh-h! ” ran among the listeners. Murder!

“ I ’ll tell you more,” went on Volger, pleased at the sensation he had created. “ His

name is n't Waters, either. It's Waterman. Let some of you go and call him that, and see what he'll do."

"We'll go!" cried some, Rip first of all. They dashed off to find him.

Thus it happened that Tim and Waters had given each other the pledge to stick together only just before trouble came. They had had their supper, and, weary enough, had gone outdoors to sit upon the steps, for no one was in sight upon the street, and the coolness tempted them to run the risk of hard words from neighbors who might pass.

"Tell me about your son," Tim asked Waters. "How did he die?"

"It's little enough I can tell 'ee," Waters answered. "I was away from home, and was hurt in an accident, and my wife thought me dead, I suppose, for the poor thing did n't know what had become of me. The shock of it made her sick, and working for her livin' killed her, and the baby too, I suppose.

When I got out of hospital, where nobody had known my name, I searched after her from tenement to tenement—and New York is a bad place to find a body in—until I found where she'd died. She was buried, and the baby with her,—and I have n't been near a city since. That was eleven years ago.”

“ Too bad!” murmured Tim, caressing Waters' hand. The man was responding to the caress with pleasure, when suddenly Tim's expression changed. “ There's Rip coming, and some others,” he said. “ Let's go indoors!”

But Waters did not move. “ Don't budge,” he said. “ Let them not think we're afraid of them. Words don't kill.”

Rip and his followers came nearer till they halted at the fence, which was only a few yards away. Waters looked at them calmly; but Tim quailed, with the feeling of dread which he could not repress in Rip's presence, from old unkindness' sake. He saw

that Rip had come on purpose to badger them. Standing in the gateway, Rip bowed low.

“ Good-evening, Mr. — *Waterman!* ”

At his side Tim felt Waters stiffen. He looked up, and his guardian's face was pale. Waters' eyes shot fire at Rip, and then at the others, who repeated in chorus:

“ Good-evening, Mr. — *Waterman!* ”

“ That 's not his name! ” cried Tim, indignant because Waters, as he supposed, was angry. But Waters pressed his arm.

“ Let them talk, ” he said.

“ Oh, that 's not his name? ” cried Rip, delighted at the response. “ How do you know, you young scab? Then what is his name? ”

“ What is his name? ” asked all the others. But now Tim sat silent.

“ Perhaps the police could find out his name for us, ” cried Rip, in high feather. “ Could they, Mr. Waterman? ”

“ Could they, Mr. Waterman? ” chanted his chorus.

“ Perhaps we could ask them to try,” suggested Rip, watching Waters’ white face. “ Sha’n’t we ask them, Mr. Waterman? ”

“ Sha’n’t we, Mr. Waterman? ” came his echo.

But the color began to come back to Waters’ face, and with iron self-control he sat silent. Not a word did he answer to the taunts of the strikers, and not a word to their threats. He sat like a statue, until at last the only part of him which moved, his eye, began to impress them. It studied them, made them uneasy, and at last shamed them. They could make nothing out of him, and finally, uneasy before the quiet eye which stared them down, they went away, shouting back one last threat:

“ We ’ll set the police to find out about it, Mr. — *Waterman!* ”

Waters watched them till they turned the corner, and were gone. Not till then, after that first quiver, did he move, but when they were gone his whole body shook, his face

paled again, and he dropped his head into his hands.

“What is it?” cried Tim, clutching his arm in fright. “What is it?”

“Trouble, lad!” answered Waters between his hands.

## CHAPTER XXII

### CONFESSION

**I**T seemed to Tim that, after those mysterious taunts of Rip and his followers, Waters was a changed man. The strike had already made him serious, but now he was by turns sad and worried. He spoke less to the boy, but oftener to himself, and once Tim heard him say, "How did they know?" Then immediately he added: "How much more do they know?" And that very night he said to Tim:

"This is harder than the strike, my lad."

And yet, in spite of his absent fits, he was kinder to the boy than ever, spoke to him more gently, looked at him affectionately and almost yearningly, and took more pains in telling him how the dyes were made. For up to now each day at the mill had been for

Tim a series of lessons in dye-making, and Waters had made running remarks upon quantities and qualities, until Tim's head was full of tourmaline and madder, fustick and logwood, pounds, ounces, quarts, and gallons. How to dye upon dyes, how to use the mordant, and when not to use it, — Tim had listened to the precepts until it seemed to the others as if his little brain would whirl with them. And Pelham had asked when they were alone:

“Tim, do you remember any of what he tells you?”

“I remember most of it,” Tim had answered earnestly. “Honestly I do, Pelly. I — I just love to learn it, it's so wonderful.”

But it was not only the rules of dyeing which Waters had taught to Tim. He tried to teach him the unteachable, not by rule and precept, but by seeing. He would call the lad to the dye-tank, when the mixture was almost made, and would point to the liquid, which to ordinary eyes was uninteresting or

even unpleasant. But Tim would hang over the strange mess, and try to see in it all that Waters saw.

“Remember what we’re working for,” Waters would say. “An olive green, — the real olive, Tim. Ye must see the yellow in it, feel it, *sense* it. A little more of the ochre, lad, and stir it well. A little more, — just a pinch more. Now canst see the bloom of it?”

“I can! I can!” Tim would cry in excitement.

“’T is done!” Waters would say with great satisfaction. “In with the cloth, then.”

It was a great joy to him that the boy was so quick to learn. Pelham was quick; Nate called him a “mighty spry helper,” but the lad was no more remarkable than any other bright boy that had passed under Waters’ hands. Tim was something apart. Of all the apprentices that the master-dyer had taught, no one had begun so young as Tim, and no one had been so *wise* in the craft, who seemed to grasp the deeper secrets of it, to

understand it almost by instinct, — in a word, to have the *sense* of it. Waters was slow to praise, and he had not yet said to Tim half of what he thought; but time and again, since the strike began, had he said to himself with delight: “Tim is a dyer born! I’ll teach him all I know, and he’ll be better at it than I!” Such was the man’s unselfish enthusiasm over the skill of his ward.

But now all was changed suddenly by Rip’s latest taunt. In their life together Tim had caught from Waters a joyous hope of the future, of a life spent happily in the same work. But now, on the very first day, Tim felt with alarm that Waters seemed bidding farewell to it all, and as if he were giving his last lessons in the art they both loved.

“Don’t ’ee forget, now,” he said, “just how the dye looked for the dark rose. Keep that tint apart from all the rest in your mind, Tim; it’s a specialty of mine, and the stuffs run so different you can never make it entirely from rule, — you have to fuss till you

get it, but it's worth the fussing. The great thing is to remember how ye once got a color, so don't forget the dark rose, boy."

He showed Tim particularly that day how to make another of his special colors, which in his secret heart Waters considered superior to anything that Nate ever made. It was a royal purple of superb richness. "I had n't meant to bother thee with this yet awhile, lad," he said, "but just try to remember it. It's — it's one of my best."

Tim heard a catch in Waters' voice, and looked up quickly. "Is anything wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing, lad," answered Waters, recovering himself with great self-control. "Tend to the dye, now, and remember what I tell 'ee." After that he spoke cheerfully, but Tim could not cast off the feeling that Waters was saying good-bye to his work. Tim did his best to make his guardian forget himself; he laughed, he chatted, he worked most actively, but all to no purpose.

At noon of that day the little working force went outside the mill and sat down in the shade, there to enjoy the excellent lunch which every day was sent from Mr. Dodd's house, and in which Waters, Nate, and Tim always shared. It was to the workingmen very much of a privilege to eat with their employers, not because the food was better than ordinary, but because the feeling of companionship was so strong. The talk was always of the work, — its details, the methods of improvement, and especially whether the contract work would be finished on time. And whenever that question came up Tim and Pelham felt important, because everything depended upon the dyers.

This day, as they sat eating in the shade, some of the strikers gathered at a distance, and began to hoot unintelligible sounds. "That is strange," said Mr. Dodd. "They never shouted at us before. And what are they saying? Watertown? Watertown? At any rate, it's one word over and over again."

Others guessed at what the strikers were

saying, and guessed in vain, all but Tim and Waters. They alone knew the word, "Waterman! Waterman!" But they said nothing about it, although Tim turned pale and looked at his guardian, and Waters, growing red, looked straight ahead of him, as if he saw nothing. But when they were at work again, having allowed themselves but a half-hour for lunch, Tim saw that Waters was more absorbed than ever, while he spoke with a kinder and yet sadder voice.

That evening at closing-time Mr. Dodd, as usual, came to the dye-room to see how the work was coming on. "How are you making out?" he asked.

Nate grinned at him. "I don't s'pose I can ever git used to seein' you in overalls, Mr. Dodd. — We're comin' out all right, I guess, since we're keepin' to the same pace. We'll jest about squeeze through, an' that's all."

"Good!" said Mr. Dodd, heartily. "And do you think so too, Waters?"

“ I think so,” said Waters without a smile.

“ You ’re not working too hard, are you?” asked Mr. Dodd, anxiously. “ You must n’t hurt yourself, Waters, with these long hours.”

“ I ’ve got something on my mind, that ’s all,” replied the dyer. “ Don’t worry about my health, Mr. Dodd. And we ’ll get through with the work all right — if I ’m spared to it.” But these last words he uttered under his breath, and only Tim heard them.

Then, looking down, he caught the boy’s eye. Mr. Dodd had turned to Pelly, and Waters put his hand on Tim’s shoulder. “ Don’t look so troubled, lad,” he said. “ Come home wi’ me, and I ’ll tell ’ee all about it, for I ’ve got to tell some one.”

When they were at home, and their supper eaten, he led Tim out upon the steps again. “ Nay,” he said, as Tim hung back, “ come along, and never mind what may be said to us. I ’ll soon have to appear for what I am.”

They sat down upon the steps together, and Waters, putting his hand upon Tim’s shoulder,

found the lad trembling with anxiety. "It's been hard on thee," he said. "I could n't tell thee about it at the very first. It came upon me sudden like, and I had to think it over. But I'll tell the worst of it in a breath, Tim. I — killed a man. — Do 'ee shrink from me, boy?"

For Tim had shrunk back in surprise. But hearing the sudden distress in Waters' voice, the lad flung himself into his arms. "No, no!" he cried. "I'll stand by you always!"

"My own lad!" murmured Waters, clasping him close. For a moment they embraced, and all the love of a lonely boy, and all the yearning of a bereaved man, were expressed in little broken murmurs and in their clasping arms. Then Waters put Tim gently beside him again.

"I'm no murderer, Tim," he said, "though the law may hold me so. I struck in self-defence, and the Lord knows how I felt when I saw him lying at my feet. But, like a fool, I did not wait to give myself up to the police.

I'd been married only a year, and I wanted once more to kiss thy mother and thee, — ah, lad, see what I've said! It's come over me stronger and stronger, as if thou art really my son, — my own son that I lost so long ago!"

"Think of me so!" begged Tim. "Think of me so, and call me your son, now that you've told me this!"

"Then for the rest of the time I will," agreed Waters, "till we part for good."

"Part?" cried Tim.

Waters quieted him by a smile. "Let me tell 'ee the whole story," he said, "and then we'll talk about the future. — I ran away to kiss my wife and child," he said. "I was in New York. I took the ferry to Brooklyn, and there was a collision. Some were drowned, but I waked up after a month in a hospital, where no one knew my name. Still possessed by the idea to see my wife once more, — though the police would have let her see me, Tim, had I only thought of that, — I gave the wrong

name, and when they let me out, a fortnight later, I searched for my wife again. I've told 'ee the story, but not all of it. She'd been turned out in Brooklyn for want of money, but I found a man I could trust, and he traced her for me. She'd died, he told me at last; she'd been buried with her baby, and my heart was nigh broken. And then I did n't know what to do. But I did n't want to die, Tim, and the police had n't found me, so I came away here and began a new life. It has all gone well till now, but they do say 'Murder will out.' Volger, he must have seen me in the old days, and remembered me, though I don't remember him. — Say you don't blame me, lad."

"I?" cried Tim. "I could n't blame you!"

"Thankee, lad," said Waters. "I shall remember that where I'm going." He saw the look of alarm in Tim's eyes, and added: "Prison, lad."

"Oh!" cried Tim, catching his hand.

"Now, listen," commanded Waters, firmly.

“I’ve got a duty to fulfill to Mr. Dodd here. He must fill his contract, and justice can wait till then, it’s waited so long already. If only Volger and his crowd will spare me for three days more, I’ll still work at the mill. Then I’ll give myself up. But — they may arrest me first.”

“Run away from it,” urged Tim. “Run away again.”

Waters shook his head. “Guilt will follow me wherever I go. It’s hung over me all these years; now I’ll go and take my punishment. — But I want to speak of the dyeing, Tim, in case I’m taken before the work is done.”

“Who’ll finish the work?” asked Tim.

“You must!” answered Waters, firmly. “Never look like that. Nate can’t do it all without four eyes and two sets of hands, and he’ll never grow them in time. You must do it, Tim.”

The lad shook his head helplessly. “I could n’t,” he said.

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“ You must,” said Waters. “ — Only it may never happen, so we ’ll say no more of it, except that you can do it if you try.” Then he caught the boy suddenly to him. “ Oh, Tim,” he cried, “ it ’s hard on me to leave ’ee, but anyway I ’ve had ’ee for a while. Don’t forget me, lad!”

“ Never,” answered Tim, his tears flowing. “ Never, father!”

“ Call me that and I ’ll bear anything!” was Waters’ response. So as father and son they went to bed that night, and never again called each other by other names.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE ARREST

**I**N the morning they went to their work as usual, but on the street they were waylaid and followed by Rip and his set, who chanted "Waterman" after them until they were safely inside the mill. At the first sight of them Tim took Waters' hand, and he held it until they reached the mill, when he gave a sigh of relief.

"That's nothing, lad," said Waters. "If they do no more than call names I'm well pleased."

He took great pains with Tim that morning, explaining formulas, and showing him every step in the processes, and especially pointing out to him those subtle differences in the dyes made by a bit more, or a bit less, of this material or that. Once he laid his

hand on Tim's shoulder and said: "Ah, lad, I meant to have taught 'ee this through many a year," and at his words and tone Tim was suddenly blinded by tears. When noon came Waters said with a sigh of relief:

"One more half day gone."

At lunch the distant picket of Rip and his friends gathered again and shouted their war-cry, until Mr. Dodd was again set wondering what they said. He asked, "Can any one tell me what it is?"

"They're saying 'Waterman,' sir," answered Waters, composedly. "'T is a name they have for me." His face was not red now, and his manner was very quiet. He even smiled at Tim, and the boy understood that since telling his story Waters felt that the burden was off his mind. He had chosen his course, and would finish his work if fate permitted. Otherwise he would go to prison if he were called, and go with good courage.

Fate decided against him. They had not

finished a half-hour of the afternoon's work, when they heard a clamor in the mill-yard, and looking out, saw strangers there. Dropping his work, Pelham rushed to the window at once, and the others stood in their places and watched.

"On my soul!" exclaimed Nate. "There's Rip McCook, and he's got the constable with him; and all of 'em argifyin' with Bob and Mr. Dodd. They're comin' here!"

Through the window they heard Bob's voice. "This is no place for you, Rip."

"I tell you I'm coming to point out a criminal," squalled Rip, between defiance and fear. "Don't you lay hand on me! The law won't allow it."

Tim felt his knees weaken beneath him, and they shook with fright. He looked at Waters, and found him perfectly calm.

"Lad," said the dye-master, "finish this up right; the madder's all measured out to go in. Only half the quantity of water at first; then pour in the rest. And take this."

He put his hand in his pocket and drew out a piece of paper, which he put into Tim's hand. "'T will tell 'ee what colors to dye the rest of the bolts, but thee must do the mixin' thyself'. Remember, it must be done! They 're special orders. Good-bye, lad."

"G-good-bye," gulped Tim. They shook hands like men. Then the door opened suddenly, and the constable pushed in, followed by Rip, who, exulting in his errand, and yet afraid of the dogged Bob, who followed him closely, fairly yelled as he saw Waters.

"There he is!" he cried, pointing a shaking forefinger. "I give him in charge. Arrest him! Arrest him!"

The constable started toward Waters, but Mr. Dodd interposed. "Your warrant first," he said. "What is the charge?"

"Murder," said the constable, shortly, giving Mr. Dodd the warrant.

"Murder!" cried the others, instinctively drawing back.

"Yes, murder!" shouted Rip in triumph.

“Now aren’t you proud of him? Hadn’t Tim better stayed with us?”

His further remarks were cut short by a hand on the back of his neck, and by fingers which pressed with force on the lean sinews. Rip gave one yelp of fear, and recognizing Bob’s clutch, was silent.

“Has he done what he came for?” asked Bob of the constable.

“He has,” was the answer, and the official tried not to see the connection between Bob’s hand and Rip’s neck.

“Then he may as well leave,” said Bob. He whirled Rip around at arm’s length, and propelled him toward the door so rapidly that Rip, striving to keep his balance, seemed to be running airily upon his toes. “Good-bye, Rip,” said Bob cheerfully at the door, and gave one push. Rip shot out into the mill-yard. Make his legs twinkle as he might, they could not keep up with the upper part of his body, to which the chief impetus was given. The head, therefore, and the flapping

arms, of which Pelham got a joyous glimpse, so much outdistanced the legs that Rip plunged forward much as a schoolboy does at his first dive. But no gentle element received the hapless Rip. The mill-yard was packed gravel, nothing else, upon which neither the skin of his nose nor the palms of his hands made any impression. Pelham, dancing with happiness, distinguished the two tremendous slaps which Rip gave his mother earth, and saw him endeavoring to butt his way through to China. Then Bob closed the door, and the rest was lost; but Pelham's delight was exquisite.

Yet no one else smiled, not even Bob himself, whose grim satisfaction instantly gave way to alarm for Waters. Mr. Dodd, who had glanced hastily at the warrant, and seen that it was in proper form, was questioning the dyer. "Waters, what is all this about?"

"The truth, sir," answered Waters, calmly. "I did kill a man, and they've found me out here at last. I'll have to go with him."

There was dead silence for a moment, as those present took in the meaning of the dyer's words. Then Mr. Dodd said, huskily, "Yes, you 'll have to go."

"Don't handcuff me!" cried Waters, hoarsely, as he saw the constable draw the handcuffs from his pocket. "You must? Then here!" And drawing himself up like a soldier, Waters held out his hands for the irons.

"Oh, father! father!" cried Tim, rushing at him, and Waters, instantly stooping, caught him. No one interrupted their embrace, but all stood, with tears in their eyes, until Waters himself brought it to an end.

"There, there, my son," he whispered at length. "I must go. Now remember, and work." Then rising once more, he held out his wrists again, and allowed himself to be handcuffed.

"I 'm sorry," mumbled the constable, when it was done.

"And I 'm sorry," said Mr. Dodd also.

“Waters, I’ll see that you have good treatment.”

“Thankee, sir,” answered Waters, bravely. “But what I most ask is that ye look after the boy. He’s got no one now.”

“He’ll go home with us,” cried Pelham, quickly. Waters questioned Mr. Dodd with his eyes anxiously, but his employer nodded.

“I’ll look after him,” he said.

“Then I’m satisfied,” said Waters, with a great sigh of relief. “All ready, constable.” The two went to the door, and the others followed them out into the mill-yard. All the work of the little company was stopped, and they gathered there to watch Waters go away, and to discuss the blow which his loss was to them.

“It’s — it’s astonishing,” said Mr. Dodd, shaking his head. “I never was more surprised. He’s a good workman, and I will do all I can for him. But it’s a severe loss to us.”

“What can we do, sir?” asked Bob.

“Nothing,” answered Mr. Dodd. “We cannot get out the cloth on time. I never failed to fill a contract before,” and his voice almost faltered, so dear to him was his record, “but without another dyer the thing’s impossible.”

“Send for one,” suggested Mr. Spotts.

“No,” said Mr. Dodd, firmly. “Our trade secrets are worth everything to us, and I’ll have no stranger at the dyeing-rooms. We’ll be but a few days behind; the fault is none of mine, and we shall be excused for the delay.” Then his mind went back to Waters. “He must have expected it,” he said. “He gave me some money last night, and his savings-bank book. It was for me to keep for the boy, he said.”

“Where is Tim?” asked Pelham, suddenly.

Tim was not there, no one had seen him go with Waters, and they went together to look for him in the dye-room, expecting to find him weeping in a corner.

But there stood Tim at his machine, care-

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fully measuring the water as he poured it into the tank. He looked at Nate reproachfully. "You 're wasting time," he said.

"Good Lord!" breathed Nate, and sprang to his jigger.

"Tim," cried Mr. Dodd, "you never can do this work yourself!"

To Tim's face came the determined look which only Pelham had ever seen there. "I can try," he said. "Father said I must."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE NEW DYER

**O**UR story has for some time had little to do with McCook senior, and even now it is no more concerned with him than to relate the taunts which he heaped upon his son Rip. “You ’ve failed again!” he cried, shaking his finger in front of Rip’s plastered nose. “Got the man arrested, and got your nose skinned, and they ’re going on dyeing just the same at the mill, *and Tim ’s doin’ the work!*”

“He ’s not!” cried Rip, furiously.

“He is that!” replied McCook. “They ’re boastin’ it all over the town.” He shook his fist this time. “An’ that ’s the boy ye drove out of my house, to go and take his earnings elsewhere!”

“ *I* drove him out of your house?” sneered Rip. “ If ever anyone gave cause for a boy to run away, it’s yourself. Have n’t I seen you beat him, and — ”

“ Anyway, you ’ve not stopped them workin’ at the mill,” insisted McCook, changing the subject. “ An’ what ’s to become of this strike of a week, I ’d like to know, that ’s lasted ten days already? An’ me drawin’ on my savin’s so soon! ”

“ All you think of is money,” snarled Rip.

“ All you think of is mischief,” growled his elder. “ A mighty mess you ’ve made of it now! How are you going to make Mr. Dodd call us back? Will you burn the mill? ”

“ Yes!” snarled Rip, “ I ’ll burn the mill, or blow it up, or do something, rather than be beat. A nice fix I ’d be in, losin’ my place at the mill, and no way to earn money. But you don’t care for me, so long’s you ’re all right.”

And he flung out of the house in a storm of anger and terror. He had (thanks to Bob

Dodd) missed the exquisite pleasure of yelling taunts after Waters on his way to prison, and he had done himself and the strikers no good by betraying the dye-master, for here was that wretched Tim doing all the work and saving Mr. Dodd his contract. As his friends frequently reminded Rip, the turbine had not yet arrived, and although its bearings were all ready for it, and its connections with the mill already made, there was no knowing when it would come, — for Volger's statement that the turbine was at the railroad station was either a mistake or a pure invention.

And now it was Rip's own friends who reminded him of this, — the friends who once had gloated over trouble. The fact was that they cared chiefly for mischief, but little for hardship, and still less for crime. There was not one of them, he thought with disgust, whom he would have trusted to go with him to the mill on his loom-smashing expedition. There was not one of them who could be depended on to fight the strike through to the

bitter end, "For they can go back to work," thought Rip, angrily, "but I can't, unless Mr. Dodd gives in." While the older men were openly ready to go back to work, the younger were wavering. "Cowards every one," thought Rip.

And next he came to words with Volger himself. The older man sought Rip out and accused him abruptly. "You got Waters arrested all yourself," he said. "Why did n't you tell me of it first?"

"I meant it for a surprise," faltered Rip.

"You'll have a surprise yourself some of these days," warned Volger. "Waters was my meat, he was! What business had you interferin'?"

Rip grew angry. "You ain't my boss!"

"I'm boss of this union," asserted Volger.

But Rip's next shot brought him down. "S'posin' I ask for an accountin' of the funds?" It was only a guess of Rip's, but it was a good one, for he had noticed that

whenever the money was spoken of Volger was uneasy. And now the president-treasurer weakened instantly.

“Pshaw!” he said, trying to be good-natured. “What’s the good of us quarrelin’? Let’s see what we can do, instead of bein’ cat and dog.”

“But what can we do?” grumbled Rip. “I don’t see anything, unless we go to work and burn the whole place, and spoil it for every one.”

“None of that!” cried Volger, in genuine fright. “That means prison.”

“I just can’t bear that Mr. Dodd should dye all this stuff, and get it away from us, and then settle down to wait his month out, until the fellers weaken. If I could a’ smashed his looms!”

“Has he filled his contract?” asked Volger.

“There’s the stuff heapin’ higher in the finishin’-room every day,” answered Rip. “They say it’s only three days more before it’s all done.”

“Then let’s make sure that it never gets out of town,” said Volger.

Rip turned instantly, and stared at him. “That’s — that’s —,” but expression failed him. “You’re a wonder!” he said at last.

“Will you do it?” asked Volger.

“I will if you go too,” answered Rip. “And if we fail —” Suddenly there shone in his eye the light of an idea. “Then we’ll take the boy himself!”

“Only if we have to,” Volger warned him.

“Don’t you be a coward, too,” said Rip, contemptuously. There was in him a little of the spite and recklessness of the born criminal, who, when he sees the world against him, fights it with knife and teeth. “All of you make me tired sometimes.”

Volger felt a little frightened, lest he should be drawn into some very criminal action. “Well, when shall we go and spoil the corduroy?” he asked.

“To-night,” said Rip. “But what shall we do to it?”

“Slash it with knives,” was the answer. “Get a good one, long and sharp, and I’ll go with you after supper.”

“I’ll bring more than a knife,” muttered Rip to himself.

There was only one mistake which Rip and Volger made, and that was in believing that there were three days left. In fact there was but one, but Mr. Dodd, intending to be prepared against any attempt of the strikers to steal his goods, had given out the false information, intending, the minute the last bolt was finished, to cart the whole to the railroad and ship it all off. Mr. Dodd made no provision against injury to the goods, other than to keep a sharp watch on all the buildings, — a sharper watch than either Rip or Volger realized.

That was Tim’s first real day of dyeing. The afternoon before Waters had left the dye half mixed, with the materials all weighed and measured, and all Tim had had to do was to put the cloth in and take it out at the right

time, to wash it, and then to pass it on to the driers. But to-day he had to begin from the beginning, — mix four times, dye two bolts in each mixture, — and all on his own responsibility. No two of the dyes were alike, all had to be handled with the utmost care, and one of them was Waters' own special dark rose. He waked early and thought of it, in the unfamiliar room at Mr. Dodd's, and though Pelham lay asleep at his side, Tim could scarcely master his fright at his responsibility.

But when the time came he went boldly at the work. Arthur was his helper now; Tim had asked for him on the day before. Arthur was strong, and could relieve Tim of the heavy work; he was deft, and could be trusted with tending the jigger. All Tim had to do was to weigh and mix, and to watch the colors and the cloth. Too much or too little of any one thing, and cloth would be spoiled, and time lost.

Mr. Dodd helped to give him courage. "Don't think about it too much, Tim," he

said at the beginning of the work. "If you can do it, then I'm pleased. But if you spoil a bolt or two, or even if you can't manage it at all, — then never mind. I'm obliged to you for trying, that's all."

So Tim began bravely. He knew that Nate was watching him half curiously, half sympathetically. He knew that Pelham was marveling, and he knew that very much depended on himself. It is hard, in the midst of people, to be alone with a responsibility, to have to do something in which no one can help you; and it is especially hard if you are but a boy. But then a boy will show if he has in him the makings of a man, — and Tim showed that he had them. Into his face came first the determined look which Pelly knew, and then as he took up the scoop and approached the first barrel the wise expression came into his eyes.

"Look at him!" whispered Nate to Pelly. "See him scooping out the stuff as if he'd done it all his life. That's the boy for you!"

And from that minute Tim did his work, and did it well. "Don't suggest anything, or you'll upset me," he said to Arthur, and the older boy loyally held his tongue and did whatever he was bid. Once only did Tim call Nate to look at a mixture. "Does it look quite right, for a chrome?" he asked.

Nate surveyed the dye, and then looked at the boy. "It would make *a* chrome," he said, "but what would you do if you did what you want to?" Tim said nothing, but opened his hand and showed that it was full of red powder. Nate stared at him in surprise.

"Waters never showed you that!" he cried.

"No," admitted Tim. "He never puts red in his chrome, but it seems to me it needs it to be just right."

"Bless you!" said Nate, "that's a trick of my own. And you guessed it all by yourself? Scatter the stuff in, boy, stirring all the time, and you'll prove yourself a dyer."

So Tim went all the more boldly at his

work, and succeeded. That night the proper number of bolts were dyed, and dried, and stacked to be finished, and not one had been spoiled, nor had a single ounce of dye-stuff been wasted. Nate opened his mind on the subject to Pelly. "Some are *born* great," was all he said, but he jerked his thumb in Tim's direction, and the expression of his face said all that was needed.

Mr. Dodd came and thanked Tim, and praised him. "And," he said, "it's your regular turn to watch to-night until nine, but you'd better go home and rest."

But Tim begged leave to stay. Though he did not say so, it would be uncomfortable for him without Pelham at the rich folks' house, and Pelham was to stay and watch. Besides, Tim hated to give up a duty. Now that Waters was gone there was one less at the watching, and the boy felt that each should do his share.

"All right, then," said Mr. Dodd. "Bob stays, you know, and so you will be all right,

for I will never leave you two boys here alone again. Good-bye!”

Bob and Pelham and Tim, then, stayed at the mill, and made their rounds together. Since the night of Rip's visit there the watchers had made the rounds of the mill-grounds every hour,—a tedious task, but necessary, if the property was to be preserved. This was a cloudy night, with no moon, and as the dark came on Bob proposed that they should not light the lantern.

“I have an idea,” he said, “that it's the best way to catch any one that comes. Every night I'm here I poke round a good deal in the dark. But—” and he sighed—“I don't suppose I'll have the luck to catch any one.”

They made the rounds once at half-past six, again at half-past seven, and finally, in complete darkness, at half-past eight. All they had to do was to circle the outside of the buildings, to see that no windows had been touched. Lights were on in the mill at regu-

lar intervals, and the three watched keenly for any movement inside. "Carrying no light," Bob explained, "we can't be seen, and we might just run on some one. — Who's that? Down!"

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE SLUICEWAY AGAIN

**A**T the completion of their round they had come to the corner of the dye-house, and were about to enter the mill-yard, when they heard a crunch of gravel, as if a boot had stirred it. There was long grass there, and following Bob's dim figure, the two boys threw themselves into the grass, and peered into the mill-yard through this screen.

The yard was dimly lighted by the lamps in the mill, which cast their beams, feeble, it is true, into the gravelled space through which ran the covered sluice. The buildings stood on both sides of the yard; near where the boys were the sluice ended at the wheel; and at the other end was the sluice-gate, now shut these many days to keep back the mill-pond water. The whole surface of the yard, then, was

faintly lighted, except close to the walls and between the windows, where were some sixty thickly shadowed spots, which the lights from across the yard did little to illumine. In one of these there might be some one hiding, and Bob was still just boy enough to long to catch a thief.

“ Quiet,” he whispered to the others. “ Lay low, and if they have n’t heard us they ’ll show themselves. They ’ll think we ’re in the office. — Look! ”

Suddenly, silently, at the finishing-room window, a figure had appeared, and stood there working at the sash. Then a second showed at its side, and the watchers saw a flash of steel as the two tried together to pry the window open. Quietly Bob raised himself to his knees, then to his feet, and with the stealth of a cat began to tiptoe toward the men. At his heels the two boys as silently followed, with their hearts so high in their throats as almost to stop their breath. Nearer they stole, and nearer.

But gravel is always gravel, and will crunch. It had betrayed the men, but now it warned them. Under Bob's foot it shifted, and instantly the two men turned. With a roar of disgust Bob rushed at them, and the men turned at once and scurried away. Behind them all skimmed the two boys, only less swift than Bob himself. They gained rapidly on the men. Bob saw the distance lessening between them, calculated that he should reach them before they reached the darkness, and set his teeth for a tussle. Then suddenly the chase ended.

The men, in glancing back over their shoulders, lost much speed, but saw their danger. "Into the sluice!" yelled one of them suddenly, and into it they plunged. They hurled themselves at the sluice-gate as if to leap over it into the mill-pond that washed its further side; but instead they seized the top of the gate and wriggled like rats into the dry and hollow sluiceway. Bob, Pelham, and Tim stopped above them, baffled. Below them

they heard the panting of the fugitives, but solid plank separated them, and while they hesitated to try to follow them into the darkness, a voice called from the sluice:

“Keep out o’ here, or we’ll put a bullet into you!” The sluiceway muffled the voice, and it could not be recognized.

Bob stamped in disgust, then meditated, fretting. Help would not come for half an hour, and he could not weaken his little force by sending one of the boys for aid. He even disliked to divide forces, but he saw that he must, if the men were to be caught. Bending down, he put his ear to the planking, and then turned to the little boys.

“They are crawling along the sluice,” he said. “They mean to get out by the lower end while we wait here. I must go down there, but you two guard this end. Here —” and Bob ran quickly to a pile of lumber left by the machinists who had been making ready for the turbine. From this he snatched two short pieces of joist, and brought them to the

boys. "Take these," he said. "Hammer the men if they put their heads out. I don't believe they have pistols, so don't be afraid of them, for they can't get at you. Good-bye!"

Had Bob considered long enough, he would never have left the two boys alone. But his desire to catch the men mastered him, and he ran off down the mill-yard, while the boys watched his dim figure flitting in and out of the lines of light that shone through the windows. Then the little boys looked at each other. Tim was glad that the darkness could not show how pale he was, for he felt just as he had in the mill when they two were looking for Rip. Now, to be sure, he could run away; but afraid as he was of the two men, he was still more afraid to desert his post. So he stood, and shook in spite of himself, and hoped that Pelham did not know how scared he was.

Pelham was not the kind to suspect another of being afraid. He gripped his club, and stole nearer the sluice-gate, ready to strike.

“I wish they ’d come out. Don’t you?” he asked. Tim, though he kept manfully at Pelham’s side, was honest and made no answer. “They’re not here, anyway,” added Pelham, regretfully. “Bob’ll have all the fun.”

From Bob’s end of the sluice came the sound of a thump and a broken yell. Then they heard Bob’s voice. “Try it again! Give me one more good chance at you, and you won’t get back!—Yes, I’ll come in there presently, don’t you fret.”

“Got ’em, Bob?” called Pelly.

“Got one good crack at them,” answered Bob. “I’m just waiting now for them to come out again. I—”

So far they had heard his clear voice, when suddenly, from the other end of the sluice, came a flash and a report. Then there was complete silence.

“Bob, Bob!” called Pelly in fright.

With relief they heard his answer. “Cock-shot!” There was a savage ring to his voice.

“Try it again, you cowards!” Then came a familiar sound, of stone striking wood.

“He’s stoning them,” cried Pelly in delight. “Now they’ll — Ah!” For there came a second pistol-shot.

“All right!” called Bob again from the darkness. “I never even heard the bullet. — Show your head again, you sneak!” And bump went a second stone into the sluiceway.

“I’ll bet on him,” whispered Pelham. “Soon as he gets the range they’ll keep inside.”

He spoke the truth, for there was no more shooting. Twice more they heard Bob’s stones thump into the wooden sluice, and twice they heard him beg the thieves to show their heads. He was, as the boys guessed, safely hidden by the shadow, while a light shone clearly upon the opening where the men were concealed. The advantage was all with him, and he was able to maintain it.

But the next move of the men was sudden and unexpected. “Don’t you suppose,” Tim

had just asked hopefully, "that some one will hear the shooting and come?"

"Perhaps," Pelham was answering. "But you see —"

There was a shuffling beneath them, and a dark head rose out from the opening. A hand grasped the edge of the gate, a second figure rose, waist high, and turned a masked face upon the lads. Tim saw the white visage, with the blank eyeholes, and started back. The first man was already climbing out.

But Pelham, with ready club, dashed forward and struck. Whack! and the masked robber barely caught the blow upon his arm. "Take the other, Tim!" shouted Pelly, and struck again. Whack! The man ducked down into the sluiceway, and the blow fell upon the wood.

And Tim, recovering himself, struck at the first man. The fellow was supporting himself by an arm upon the boarding, and the blow fell upon the shoulder, glanced down the arm, and stopped upon the fingers. With a

grunt the man dropped down into the darkness before Tim could strike again.

“Bob!” shouted Pelly.

“Com-ing!” And they heard his rapid feet upon the boarding, which gave him a perfect track. A few seconds, and he would be there.

“Now, you men in there!” shouted Pelly, exulting.

But the men in the sluice heard Bob also. An arm rose from the darkness, and as Pelly leaped at it the revolver barked almost into his face. The flame rushed by him, and he felt it sting his cheek.

“Uh!” he grunted, and struck. But the surprise had startled him, and he missed. Again a shot rang out, at random, but too close, and both the boys started away. At the instant the two men rose again from the sluiceway, and began to climb out upon the planking.

“Oh!” shrieked Pelham, in despair and fury, and he threw his club at them. Whirl-

ing, it fell upon them both, and knocked them back. Then Tim found his chance.

As he sprang aside he had stumbled against the post of the sluice-gate, caught at it to save himself from falling, and seized a dangling rope. It was the rope by which the gate was raised. An idea flashed into his mind, he threw all his weight upon the rope, and pulled. "Pelly!" he shouted, "help me raise the gate!" He pulled again with the strength of anger and fear, felt the gate yield, and heard the gushing water, but he knew he could never raise the gate alone, for the necessary three feet. "Pelly!" he called again, and Pelham came.

Tim saw his chum leap for the rope, felt it caught above his hand, and again threw all his weight upon it. It yielded so suddenly that the boys fell together, but they gathered in the slack, rose, and pulled once more. The gate slipped upward in its grooves and stopped. Sprawling together a second time, they held the rope taut, heard the rush of water, and

watched with suspense the two forms which were just rising to climb again. Another moment, and their hold would be secure, but the boys suddenly shouted with hysterical laughter.

For the first man staggered and fell against the second. They clutched each other, swayed a moment in full view, then disappeared. Two gurgling cries were swallowed up in water, then nothing more was seen or heard of the men. Bob came racing up.

“Bully for you!” he gasped. “Hurt, Pelly? Hurt, Tim?”

“I believe my face is burned a little,” Pelham said, rising. Bob took the rope from his hands, and secured it to its cleat, then turned his brother round to the dim light. “Speckled with powder marks,” he said. “But he did n’t hit you?” He felt his brother all over before he would be satisfied. “And you, Tim?”

“All right,” said Tim. “But — but can’t we catch them yet?” He hated to suggest more action, was unwilling to come to close

quarters with the men again, but would not allow himself to flinch.

“ We can! ” cried Bob. “ They ’ll be washed clean through the sluice. Lucky for them there ’s no wheel there. Come on! ” And they dashed for the other end.

But there was no trace of the men. They had been driven through the sluice, and had dragged their dripping selves away in the darkness before their pursuers arrived. Mr. Dodd, arriving just too late, helped in the search, but to no purpose. A revolver, with four chambers empty, was found jammed among the stones below the outlet, but there was nothing to show who owned it, or who the men had been.

## CHAPTER XXVI

"TIM, HE FIT WELL!"

"ONE more day, Tim," said Mr. Dodd on the following morning. "Can you stand it?" And as Mr. Dodd spoke he was marvelling that he, so long with such resources at command, should now be dependent upon the pale and tired boy who stood before him, and to whom he already owed so much.

"I can stand it, sir," answered Tim. "But when the day's over—might I see Mr. Waters? I have n't seen him for almost two days."

"I will arrange it," Mr. Dodd assured him. "He is well-cared for, Tim. I have made sure that he has every comfort possible. And perhaps we can set him free."

Tim shook his head. "He — he did it, sir, and he is willing to stand punishment. But some one was saying they'd be sending for him to go to New York, and I'd like to see him first."

"You shall," said Mr. Dodd, and with that to comfort him, Tim went to his last day of work. His position was heavy for him, with even Pelham looking up to him and ready to do him the slightest service, while the men would fetch and carry at his nod. To be so important oppressed Tim, and worried him lest he should not get through his day's work. And he felt so tired!

He had not slept well. Masked men prowled through his dreams, — he saw them climbing toward him out of holes, he went rolling down long sluiceways with them, driven by water, and a dozen times he had started up with pistol-shots ringing in his ears. But he gritted his teeth and went at his work, weighing and measuring, mixing and stirring, yet wishing that he might never again have

such work to do. He felt desolate without his guardian, and, in spite of those around him, lonely indeed.

And yet he got through the day. It was an interesting day, too. At noon, when they were all sitting as usual in the shade and eating their lunch, came a half-dozen men to speak to Mr. Dodd. Cudahy was at their head, and the rest of them were all from the older workmen. Mr. Dodd, dressed in his overalls like any laborer, looked up at them in their Sunday clothes.

"Well, Cudahy?" he said.

"We would say, Misther Dodd," began Cudahy, with a leap into the middle of his subject, "that it's sorry we are we made such fools of ourselves, — an' when would ye be ready to be takin' of us back?"

"Rip McCook?" asked Mr. Dodd.

"He must make his own bargain with ye, himself," answered Cudahy.

"Volger cannot come back," said Mr. Dodd. The men looked at each other. They knew

little of his underhand doings, none of them knew that he had been to the mill with Rip the night before, and they did not want to desert their leader. Cudahy, looking at his supporters, could make no answer.

“He is a mischief-maker,” said Mr. Dodd in brief explanation. “And I believe my son’s account of his powder-throwing at Nate’s house. Think it over, and when you are willing to give him up, come to me again.”

Considerably taken aback, the men started to go. Cudahy turned for a final question, upon hearing which all the others stopped and listened for the answer.

“But the new water-wheel that goes sideways, sir,” said Cudahy, “is it comin’ soon?”

“I hope to have it ready in about a week,” answered Mr. Dodd, and the men nodded with pleasure. They would not have to wait out their month, then. Mr. Dodd added, “And after that any one that takes a ride down the sluice is likely to regret it.”

Cudahy saw that he spoke with meaning.  
“I don’t understand, sir.”

“Two men were here last night,” said Mr. Dodd, “who tried to break into the finishing-room. They were chased into the sluice, the water was turned on, and they were washed out.”

“The likes of that, now!” exclaimed Cudahy.

“And it is no fault of theirs that my two sons are not dead this morning,” Mr. Dodd said.

“What!” cried Cudahy.

“Pelly,” ordered his father, “show your cheek.” And Pelham, with pride, turned to Cudahy a cheek, the very look of which had made his mother shudder and turn pale.

“Powther burns!” cried Cudahy, while the others pressed nearer to look.

“We shall be armed ourselves after this,” said Mr. Dodd, “and shall shoot on sight. And the constable is looking for two men who were wet through last night. That is

all.” With a nod of his head he dismissed the men, who went away wondering.

“That is settled,” said Mr. Dodd with a sigh of relief. “I’ll give them four days more to give Volger up, and then we shall have them coming home like sheep. Poor fellows! they have bought their knowledge dearly.” And he caressed his youngest son, and looked fondly at his oldest, thinking how nearly the strike had cost him dearer still.

And then came the last five hours of Tim’s ordeal, — a nerve-racking, brain-exhausting strain, for his legs were tired under him, and his back was weak. He even let Arthur help him with the weighing, and when it came to the royal purple he thought he should give up.

“Take something simpler, lad,” said Nate, guessing the boy’s thoughts as he saw him making ready. “Give us a plain red, and let it go at that.”

“I’ve my orders,” answered Tim, and went steadily at the work. But when almost ready,

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it seemed to him as if his judgment had left him, — he could not remember how the dye should look. He had measured right, and mixed right, but somehow it did not look right, and yet he could not tell what was lacking. Nate saw him standing and staring down into the dye, and came to his side. “Can I help?”

“Wait,” said Tim, and shut his eyes. Purple — it should be a purple, — the right purple, Waters’ best. And something was lacking, just a little more to set it right, but what? If he could only *sense* it! Tim squeezed his eyes so tight shut that golden spots danced before them. Then he understood.

“Oh!” he cried, and ran into the dye-room. Nate followed, and saw him seize a scoop of dye from a cask. “Not that!” cried Nate, and tried to stop him, but Tim pushed by, and scattered a little of the stuff into the dye. “Stir, Arthur,” he ordered, and Arthur stirred. A little more, thought Tim, and a

little more, and a little bit more. So! and he dropped the scoop.

"Now, ready with the bolt!" he cried, and Arthur sprang to the machine.

Nate went back to his jigger soberly, and catching Pelham's eye, shook his head. "Failed for once," he whispered. The two went on with their work, with occasional glances at Tim and Arthur. Tim put the bolt through the dye, hung over it, studied it, and rinsed it. He studied it again, shook his head, and put it all back again.

"See the rings under his eyes," whispered Nate, and Pelham nodded.

Again Tim put the cloth through the dye, rinsed it, and studied it. He shook his head, thinking deeply, and Nate came and stood over him and did likewise.

"Not right," said Nate.

"Not right," echoed Tim.

"Try again," Nate said.

But Tim looked up, with fire in his eye. He stared at Nate haughtily, turned on his

heel, and walked into the dye-room. There they heard him weighing again.

"The boy's clean crazy," said Nate.

"Arthur!" called Tim, and Arthur ran to him, helped him bring out new colors, and mix them at another machine. Nate, working with Pelly, watched out of the corner of his eye. "He's going to try to dye it over," he said. "The only way, too, for it's too late to begin again. An hour more, and three more bolts. He'll —"

"Put it in," cried Tim, and Arthur began to wind the corduroy into the dye. Tim bent over to watch, Arthur craned to see, and at last Nate, unable to bear the suspense longer, left his machine and leaned over the other two. Tim watched the cloth as it came out, fingered it a moment, then straightened suddenly, hopeful.

"Finish, and then rinse," he said. Arthur wound the cloth through the dye, and then began to rinse it. Into the clear water he passed it, a yard, two yards; then Tim told

him to stop. Bending over the cloth, Tim shook it in the water and looked at it carefully. Nate leaned closer.

“Ah!” cried Nate.

“Put it all through!” ordered Tim. He looked up into Nate’s face with one flush of triumph, then turned deadly white and reeled against the tank. Nate caught him.

“All right,” said Tim. “It — it knocked me out for a moment. Arthur, you finish, and I’ll sit down.”

He sat upon the floor and put his face in his hands. Mechanically Arthur went on with the work, and muttering to himself Nate went back to his jigger. All but for the mere labor of putting the bolts in and out of the dye, the work was done. And Tim, little Tim, had done it.

Nate took Pelly by the ear and made him look up. “It ain’t like goin’ round in iron clothes an’ spearin’ other folks,” said Nate, shaking his forefinger in front of Pelly’s nose. “It ain’t even like shootin’ burglars with a

---

gun. But a good fight has been fought here this week, and we've won it;—an' Tim, he fit well!”

Then Tim rose, went to his machine, and helped Arthur finish up the job.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A MEETING OF THE UNION

SEPTEMBER had come, and it was upon a beautiful evening that Tim looked out to rest his tired eyes when all his work was done. In his heart was peace, a great contented weariness, as he started toward the jail, where Waters should tell him he had done well. But there was little peace in the councils of the union, for a meeting had just been called which was to prove a stormy one.

“We’re callin’ a meetin’,” said Cudahy abruptly to Volger, whom he met in the street that afternoon.

“*You’re* calling a meeting?” asked Volger in surprise. “The president usually does that.”

“It’s in the by-laws that ten members can call a meetin’,” answered Cudahy. “I’ve

twenty an' more at my back, an' I notify ye to be at the hall at six o'clock."

Volger sought Rip and gave him the message. "The men are going to break," he said.

"Bad luck to 'em," said Rip. "All the rest of you are safe. You can go back to work."

Volger felt inward satisfaction that this was true, but he did not express his thoughts to Rip. Since the much-too-exciting adventure of the sluiceway Volger had begun to think that Rip was a dangerous companion. The strike once over, Rip would have to leave town, there could be from the men no call for strike-pay, and of course no investigation of the union's treasury. In his heart Volger was relieved that the end of the strike was near.

But at the meeting he heard that he was not to be allowed to return to work at the mill. Cudahy gave the information. "An' I'm never the one," said Cudahy, "to be castin' asparagus on a man that may be honest, but I say to all this meetin' here assembled that

there's at least one thing that's got to be looked into. *Who* threw the powther into Nate's dye?"

Volger, seated on the platform, heard the whole assembly catch its breath, and saw that every eye was turned on him. He rose at once.

"Am I accused?" he asked.

"The two boys said ye did it," replied Cudahy.

"Boys!" cried Volger, grandly. "Their word against mine!"

"They're two of the truthfulest lads in the town," said Cudahy, doggedly. "An' that young Pelham is afraid of neither man nor ghost."

Volger knew Pelham's courage well enough, as a bruised arm could tell. But he cried in scorn, "He's a rich man's son!"

"An' a good thing for him," answered Cudahy, "for it's meself has often wished I was born with a silver knife in me mouth. But, if you please, Mr. President, I'll just

be askin' a few questions of the men that went with ye to Nate's house on that day."

Volger saw nods of approval in the meeting, and he quailed at the thought that all this was arranged. "This is very unusual," he said.

"We're not followin' rules now," answered Cudahy. And turning to the meeting he called: "All those that were at Nate's that day stand up!"

They all stood up, and Rip the first of all. In fact Rip came suddenly to his feet like a Jack-in-the-box, speaking as he came. "It's all a lie!" he cried. "It's a foolish story of them two boys, an' they hate all of us like pison."

"If it's hatin' we're speakin' of," said Cudahy, drily, "we've come to the one that can tell us all about it. Sit down, Rip McCook. We'll call on you when we need you. But you others, tell us now what you saw, you that have the green dye on your clothes."

One by one they told their story, — they had all seen nothing!

“A fine set of clear-eyed lads ye are,” said Cudahy with scorn, when Johnny Bragin, the last of them, had faltered out his testimony, while Rip and Volger smiled savagely and yet uneasily. “Had it come to the throwing of a brick, I doubt if one of ye’d have noticed it. But Johnny Bragin, now, stand up once more, boy, and tell me just one thing. Remember just how it was, look me in the eye, — no, look *me* in the eye, and just forgit that Rip and Volger’s here at all.” His eye commanded Johnny’s, and held it fascinated. Cudahy leaned forward, and seemed to lower his voice; but in the greater stillness, with every one listening to hear, the question was audible to all, — “Tell me just how it was arranged.”

“Why,” stammered poor Johnny, “Rip was to keep Nate talkin’, and Volger was to slip round sideways, an’ — ”

“No, no!” shouted Rip and Volger together.

But the meeting rose at them. "You did it!" shouted a hundred throats. "You did it!" Fists were shaken, feet were stamped, and no individual voice could be heard, till the crowd had howled down Volger and Rip, and completely shamed the band of green-dyed envoys, who sat dumbfounded. But Volger waited till the storm subsided, and then spoke again.

"Hear me!" he cried.

"No, hear *me!*" Cudahy interrupted. "Men, is *that* the man (and he pointed to Volger) that ye want for your president?"

"No! No!" shouted the whole meeting.

"Is he the one ye want for your treasurer?" asked Cudahy again.

There was a moment's silence while the true meaning of the question reached the minds of the members. Then one of them, quicker than the rest, shouted:

"No! Bring the money here, and have it counted!" And the meeting shouted it after him.

Then Volger rose and gazed sadly upon the crowd. "What have yez to say?" shouted one, but they made ready to listen. He made them a speech.

He might have taken as his text the words: "O wicked and perverse generation!" They were wrong, he said. Some day they would know they were wrong; some day they would wish back again the man they had condemned unheard. This, twice repeated, was the gist of his speech. The listeners grew restless, and some one shouted, "How about the treasury?"

"You shall have it," answered Volger. "Then you will be ashamed of your suspicions. Wait here, and I will go home for it at once." He started down from the platform, but Cudahy put him back.

"Stand there a while yet," said Cudahy. "Ye're in too good a place for us all to see ye, and the meetin' 's not over yet. I've just one more thing to say to this meetin', an' when it 's said, an' when we've all got through talkin' about it, then we'll let Mr. Volger go

home an' get his money.—Two men were at the mill last night, tryin' to break in, and they shot at both the Dodd boys. Then they was doused in the sluice. If they was members of this union I want to know it, an' the way we can learn is to find two men that came home wet. Can any one here tell of such?"

There was silence, while the members of the union looked wonderingly at each other, and then, as it were by habit, at Rip and Volger. "I tell you I did n't do it!" shouted Rip with pale face.

"No one accused ye," answered Cudahy, politely. "But who came home wet?"

There were no answers to the question. Then Rip rose to his feet. "Look here," he said, "it seems to me we're talkin' about things that have little to do with our strike. Never mind who did this or that. What we want is to beat Mr. Dodd."

"I'm not so sure," put in Cudahy.

"I am, then," retorted Rip, "and this is how to do it. Mr. Dodd's been workin' hard for

almost two weeks to fill a contract. All the work depends on the dyein', and there's a day's more work to be done. All we have to do is to take that young Tim and keep him out of the way for a few days."

Rip looked about him triumphantly, but his proposal was received with the silence of disgust. Several voices called, "We'll never do that!"

"We'll never do that," said Cudahy, rising, "for two reasons. In the first place, we've not the hard heart that's in you, Rip McCook; an' in the second place there's no use in doin' it, because the dyein's all done. — No, ye need n't look at me like that. I came across Mr. Bob this evening, an' he gave me the news social like. But now," and Cudahy again addressed the whole meeting, "havin' disposed of this young man's foolishness, which looks to me a good deal like proposin' to us to run our heads against the police, I'll ask my question once more: Were there two members of this union that went home wet last night?"

There was again no answer. Volger seemed uneasy, the elder McCook looked frightened, the rest were curious, but no one spoke. Finally Rip arose, and those who watched him admired his boldness, for he was fighting for his right to live in the town.

“Well,” he asked, “have n’t we done nothing long enough. I move we adjourn.”

“I agree to that,” said Cudahy, “with this addition, that we adjourn till half-past seven, which will give our treasurer one hour to make up his accounts, and return here with the funds.”

Accordingly the vote was passed, and the members of the union streamed out of the hall into the street. In the crowd Rip and Volger drew together, and when they met, questioned each other with their eyes. Then Rip fell a little behind Volger. “Skip?” he said in his ear, and Volger nodded. Both understood that the town was too hot for them, and that they must get away — if they could.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE FLIGHT

**O**UT in the street before the hall, where the men were standing in groups, Rip came face to face with his sister Bridget. She was carrying a bundle, and Rip scowled at the sight of it, while his evil genius prompted him to stop her. It was partly that he wanted to assert his authority over some one, and partly because he wanted some one to smart for his misfortunes, that he stepped in Bridget's way and opened on her with a volley of questions.

"What yer got there? Where yer goin'? Why are n't yer at home?"

"I'm takin' back Mrs. Cutler's things," said Bridget.

"That's right," sneered Rip, "makin' money out of father an' me, washin' for other folks with our soap and water."

“Sure I consider myself entitled to the use of all the water on the place, and every tub and washboard, Rip McCook,” retorted Biddy, angered at the public reproach, for she saw that the bystanders were listening. “An’ I use my own soap an’ my own wood. The money that I earn this way is all that keeps me lookin’ decent.”

“You ’re forgettin’ our work,” said Rip.

“’Deed an’ I ’m not,” answered Bridget. “The house is all to rights. Your clothes and Mr. Volger’s is all dried, however you got them wet, an’ I ’ve pressed your suits for ye, though ’t is little ye deserved it.”

“Oh!” cried voices near them.

Rip recoiled at the betrayal which his spite had brought upon him. He saw the men pressing closer, and heard cries for Cudahy.

“Stand back!” cried Biddy, waving away those who were coming too close. “What’s wrong with ye all?”

“So their clothes were wet last night?” asked some, while the calls for Cudahy were

repeated, and Volger began to move away, "So they did it?"

"I don't know what they did," said Biddy, "and I don't know what ye mane. Lave an honest girl alone on the public streets." And vigorously pushing through the crowd, she went on her errand.

And Rip went after Volger. He knew that Cudahy, if present, would seize him at once, but luckily for Rip there was no one there with enough presence of mind to lay hands on him, for Cudahy had gone home. Rip and Volger pushed out of the crowd, and hastened away.

"Now it's all over," said Rip, gloomily.

"Why didn't you let her alone?" asked Volger.

"Shut up!" snarled Rip. Nothing more was said between them. Like two brutes who would willingly tear each other, but who know that their only safety lies in keeping together, they hurried to their house, seized hastily upon what valuables they could carry in their pockets,

and escaped out the back door. Volger took with him his "treasury"; while Rip had taken not only his own few savings, but Biddy's and his father's little hoards as well, the hiding-places of which he had learned by long and patient watching. Together the two men stole out of the house and made their way across the fields toward the highroad.

For a while they went in silence, but their feelings were strong. To be fleeing from the town, everything lost! Kicked out of the union, their credit gone, the constable looking for them! In his mind each began blaming the other. It was almost twilight now, but on the way to the highroad they saw a building that they would have to pass. It was the jail. Volger pointed at it.

"There's where you'll be some day," giped Rip.

"You too, you bungler," growled Volger. "It's you that spoiled everything."

"It's them two boys that's been in our way every time," retorted Rip. "From first to last

they 've tripped us up. If I could only lay my hands on them, they'd suffer! Yes, an' their darling papas and guardians would suffer too. I'd take 'em away and hide 'em!"

"Quit your boasting," said Volger. "You'll never lay hands on them. An' be quiet, here's the jail." In silence they approached the building, around which their path led.

In the meantime Tim had gone to the jail, where he had had a talk with his guardian, to see whom was a great delight. But at the end of a half-hour the jailer appeared, and said the time was up. "I've got to go to the village," he said, "and it's locking-up time, anyway."

"Tell me first," said Tim, "when do you expect to hear from New York about sending Mr. Waters on?"

"There's no telling," answered the jailer. "Tammany policemen ain't always in the greatest hurry to tend to business. But if I have n't sent him on to-morrow, come again,

and you shall see him. — And, see here, there 's that young Pelham waiting outside for you. If he should give you a boost up to the window-sill, no one would know about it, and you could talk there for a while.”

“ Good! ” said Tim, and darted out.

Now the jail was an old stone building, dating back to the beginning of the town, and now used as a jail because of its great strength. Its walls were thick and its window-openings deep, so that it was quite possible for a boy to curl up with great comfort outside the bars which kept the prisoners in. Waters was on the ground floor, Pelham was at hand to lend a back, so that presently Tim was again talking with his guardian, while the jailer, whose usual business was truck farming, went to the village to buy seed, and his son kept guard over the jail.

Tim and Waters had more or less to say: about the dyes, and especially the royal purple; about the present and the past, but chiefly of the future, for Tim wished to follow

Waters to New York, and be near him during his trial. He coaxed his guardian for his consent.

“I don’t know,” said Waters, reluctant. “New York’s a huge place, and harm might come to ’ee. — I see Pelham’s beginning to fidget, so I think it must be time ye were both home. An’ it’s dusk anyway, so ’ee’d best be going. Get thee down, lad, and come in the morning.”

So Tim said good-bye, and dropped from the stone sill. Pelham, too, called a good-night, and then the two turned away. But at that moment two hurrying figures came round the corner, and ran plump into the boys. The men were Volger and Rip.

“Got ’im!” cried Rip, seizing upon Pelham. “Grab yours!” Volger at once fastened upon Tim. “We’ll take ’em with us!” cried Rip in triumph, and began to drag away his captive.

But it was not easy for him when Pelham began to struggle. The boy hung back, dug

his heels into the ground, and tried to twist away. Tim, too, resisted Volger, and from his window Waters shouted "Help!"

Then Rip, in fury, clenched his fist and struck Pelham twice upon the forehead. The boy stopped struggling and stood dazed. Again Rip struck, and Pelham fell to his knees, then collapsed upon the ground. Rip, with a snarl, sprang to Volger's help, and in a moment Tim stood helpless, his arms badly wrenched, his hands tied behind him. They dragged him to Pelham, and tied the boys together with the same cord.

"Brutes! Cowards!" thundered Waters through the bars.

"Murderer!" returned Rip. He dragged Pelham to his feet, and shook him till his eyes opened. "Come along with me," he ordered. Pelham, staggering, obeyed. "You too," Rip said to Tim, pulling at the cord.

Tim looked up at Waters. "Good-bye, father." Waters saw the cord cutting deep into the boy's wrists, the look of despair upon

Tim's face as he followed his captor out of sight.

“Help!” shouted Waters from his window. “Help! Help!” But there was no answer. Then he rushed to his door and began to beat upon it, but for a long time nobody came.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### NEWS

**W**ATERS, thundering upon the door of his cell, at last roused the jailer's son. "What you makin' so much noise for?" called the youngster in the corridor, making his voice as manly as he could, to awe the murderer.

"Open the door," answered Waters. "Something's wrong. Open!"

"Sha'n't," replied the youngster, shaking his keys, however, to show his power of choice. "You'll have your dinner when pa gets back."

"Will you go on an errand for me?" demanded Waters.

"Got to stay here," was the answer.

"Fire!" shouted Waters. "The cell's afire. Let me out!" At last he heard the key rat-

ting in the lock. But the deputy jailer, when he opened the door, looked in vain for smoke.

"You said there was fire," he complained, halting in alarm upon the threshold. Waters seized him by the collar.

"You fool!" cried the dyer. "You've lost me half an hour!" He swung the lad into the cell, and cast him into a corner. Then he darted into the corridor, shut and locked the door, and rushed out of the building, regardless of the shouts and entreaties behind him. Outside there were no signs of the fugitives, and Waters started at once, at full speed, to fetch help from the town.

Now at the Dodds' house a discovery had been made. Mr. Dodd, going home from the mill with the good news that the dyeing was at last finished, found his wife in the sewing-room and gave her his story. "And have n't the boys, all of them, done well?" he asked.

"Yes," she agreed. "But they've worn out all their clothes over it. Here I am getting out the trousers I never expected

Pelham to wear again. It's a mercy I had n't given them away. He tore them on that hare and hounds chase when he sprained his ankle."

"Which reminds me that I have a grudge against him," said Mr. Dodd. "He let out to-day, by accident, that it was Volger after all who struck him on that day."

"You must remember that that's his way," reminded his wife. "He is always too generous with those that injure him."

"He would have saved us all a lot of trouble this time if he had told," grumbled Mr. Dodd. "What have you there—a bundle of clippings? The cause of the trouble, I do believe!" For Mrs. Dodd, feeling in Pelham's pockets, had brought out a miscellany of sticks and twine, and entangled in them was a little packet of newspaper clippings.

Mr. Dodd took them, opened them, and began to read their headlines. "'Foxy Adams wanted.—Police after the Agitator-Defaulter. — The Old Game played with Success. — One more Union buncoed by the Walking Dele-

gate.' — 'That sounds familiar,'" commented Mr. Dodd with great interest. "'Went under Several Names.' — Mary, look here!"

He showed her a newspaper picture of a bearded man. "I never saw him before," she said.

Mr. Dodd covered the lower part of the pictured face. "It looks like Volger," he insisted. "I know it's Volger! That man shall be arrested till all this is looked into!" And he went hastily from the house.

At the post-office he found one of the town's two constables. "Davis," he said, calling the man aside, "you must arrest Volger for me," and he explained the case to him.

"Now you're talkin'," cried the constable admiringly. "I've always wanted to git my hands on that feller. I don't like him. Scratch me off a warrant, Mr. Dodd, and I'll jail him in an hour."

And then appeared the other constable, who had left Waters in charge of his son. "Did

I hear you say jail?" he asked. "Got anything more in my line, Mr. Dodd?"

"You'll lose something in your line some of these days," said his fellow official, "if you go off leavin' your prisoners in charge of that green youngster of yourn."

"My Tommy'll take care of any one," boasted the jailer. "Nobody'll fool him. He's too smart."

"He is, is he?" was the retort. "Then look here!" And there, rushing into the post-office, came Waters himself. The constables seized him promptly.

"How'd you get out?" asked one of them, while the other demanded, "Where's my son?"

"Your precious son's locked up in my cell for a fool," answered Waters, roughly. "See here, I want —"

"Back you go!" said both constables together, and began to hustle him toward the door. Every loafer in the neighborhood, every one who was coming for his evening

mail, and all the evening shoppers, — a total of half the male population of the town, — came rushing to see.

“Mr. Dodd,” shouted Waters, “Volger’s run off with your son!”

“Stop there!” called Mr. Dodd to the constables. “Waters, what’s all this?” And then, standing with his arms pinioned, but with sincerity in every word he spoke, Waters told his story of the carrying away of the two boys.

“Wal,” said one of the constables when he had finished, “can’t exactly say’s I blame ye for breakin’ jail.”

But Mr. Dodd looked about him on the crowd. A shopkeeper or two, the postmaster, and half-a-dozen farmers were there. And now Bob came pushing through the crowd, in anger and alarm at the news which was flying so rapidly. The street outside was filling with excited men, as shouts, “Tim Waters and Pelly Dodd are carried off!” went echoing down the street. But nine-tenths of the men

there were the strikers, — his men once, Mr. Dodd thought, but now angry with him. Could he depend on them to help? He doubted it. Signalling Bob to follow him, and ordering the constables to bring Waters, Mr. Dodd forced his way into the street.

There he met Cudahy. “Mr. Dodd,” said the workman, stopping him, “is it true that them two has taken the boys?”

“It is,” Mr. Dodd answered. “You may not believe it. Volger is your president.”

“We’ve found out about him more than you know,” answered Cudahy. “He’s lied, he’s stolen, he’s played all kinds of dirty tricks. But if he was the best one among us, an’ if Rip McCook were the prisident of the United States, I’d smash them both for layin’ hands on them boys. Say the word, Mr. Dodd. Where shall we look for thim?”

Mr. Dodd looked around on the eager crowd. There was one with green dye on his clothes, there were married men whose fami-

lies had already suffered from the strike.

“Men,” he asked, “are you with me?”

“We are!” they cried like one man. “We are, Mr. Dodd!”

“Thank God!” he responded. “We’ll get the boys, then. — Search on every road that leads out of town. Get bicycles and horses, and go as far as you can. I will pay every expense. They can’t escape us now!”

But they searched the night through, and found nothing.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE SUGAR-HOUSE

THE truth was that Volger and Rip, with the two boys, had turned aside from the main road. As they travelled, Volger suddenly said:

“They ’ll telephone in all directions.”

“Cert,” answered Rip, indifferently.

“Then they ’ll catch us,” cried Volger.

Pelham, trudging by Tim’s side, pushed against him as a sign of encouragement. But Rip said: “Don’t you worry. I know where they ’ll not find us,” and the hearts of both boys sank. Soon, without warning, Rip turned the whole party into a wood-path.

“This goes to Nate’s,” said Volger. The boys had recognized the path also.

“What if it does?” asked Rip.

“He ’ll be up here right away, now the strike ’s broken.”

“No he won’t,” snapped Rip. “Everybody ’ll be hunting for us for the next two days, and he ’ll be with ’em.”

“See here,” said Volger, stopping and drawing Rip away from the boys, “let ’s turn these two loose and run for it. They ’ll only get us caught.”

“They won’t,” answered Rip, so loud that the boys heard. “We ’ll lay low here for a day, an’ then we ’ll go through the woods across the line into New York state. It ’s only twenty miles, and woods nearly all the way. Brace up, and stop bein’ scared.”

And so, the guiding spirit, Rip drove Volger and the two boys ahead of him up the hill. The moon came out, and they were able to see their way, reaching at last the dyer’s house. But when Volger turned toward the door, Rip checked him. “Not there,” he said. “I know a better place. Keep on uphill.”

So they passed the house and went further,

trudging wearily along. The boys had had a hard day, and Tim especially. The wrists of both hurt badly; they could not help feeling frightened, and though Pelham's every nerve tingled with anger, he was anxious for his mother's sake. He had hoped to rest at Nate's cottage, but Rip drove them on till the sugar-house came in sight. "There!" said Rip.

Pelham's heart sank. Except when Nate worked there for a few weeks in spring, or the boys went there once or twice in the summer, the sugar-house was deserted. Rip had chosen his hiding-place well.

They went in, and Rip made a light, ordering the boys into a corner. Two pocketfuls of biscuits which Rip had taken from Bridget's closet were all the food they had. Rip laid half of them aside for the morning, took three himself and gave Volger three, and tossed a single one in the direction of the boys. It fell on Pelly's lap, and the two looked at it. Suddenly they realized how hungry they were.

“Well,” growled Rip, “why don’t you eat it?”

“Can’t reach it,” answered Pelly. “Untie us.”

“I guess so!” sneered Rip.

But after some thought he got up, came over to them, and untied their wrists, tying their ankles, however, securely. “There,” he grunted.

Oh, the relief of free hands! The two boys, unmindful of the biscuit, fell to rubbing their wrists, to bring the blood back to their hands. Their fingers were at first so numb that they could do scarcely anything. “Don’t you want food?” asked Rip at last, and made a step toward them as if to take the biscuit away. Pelham seized it immediately, broke it in two, and gave half of it to Tim. They ate eagerly, relieved to see Rip turn away. Dry as the food was, it was most welcome.

But it was not enough. Pelham cast a longing eye at the little store of biscuits which Rip had laid aside; they were almost

within reach. The light, a single candle-end, was not strong, and the boys were squatted on a log in a dark corner. The biscuits were on an upturned bucket, and they were too strong a temptation for Pelham. Rip and Volger, speaking in low tones, turned to the door and looked out, and Pelham, bold as ever, stretched till he almost fell from his seat, reached the biscuits, and took two. In a minute they had been quietly munched, and the boys were feeling better. Then Pelham reached again, and took two more.

But the third pair of biscuits, when these were gone, were almost too far away, and Rip and Volger turned from the door again. Pelham sat still, although he thought the loss of the biscuits would be discovered instantly. Muttering together and occasionally glancing at the boys, Volger and Rip kept on with their conference. Once they both turned away, and Pelham measured the distance to the biscuit, while Tim pressed him with his knee and frowned and shook his head to dis-

suade him. Their captors turned back, and Pelham sat rigid. Then the two men went and stood in the doorway.

Instantly Pelham hooked his foot in Tim's, reached forward, and took two more. One lone biscuit sat upon the bucket where there had been seven, and if ever a sight added relish to food, that did. The boys ate as fast as they could for quiet and for comfort, but this time Rip, turning about, caught them still chewing. He saw the lone biscuit, and understood.

"What!" he shouted, striding toward Pelham.

The boy yawned in his face. "I think I'll go to sleep now." For reply Rip caught him by the shoulders, threw him on the floor, and kicked him.

"That's one I'll remember against you," said Pelham, looking up. Rip kicked again.

"Two," counted Pelham, unflinching.

Rip drew back his foot. "Oh, if I dared to let you really have it," he snarled.

“ But you don’t! ” retorted Pelham.

Then Rip stooped, seized him again, and dragged him to his feet. “ See here,” he cried, and threw open the door of the great fire-box, above which were Nate’s skimming-pans. “ Look in there! ” Rip cried again, and pointed into the cavernous place. “ There ’s room in there for two boys of your size to smother together, if I shut up the door. Don’t talk to me of what I dare, and don’t steal any more of my food, or I’ll put you in there and leave you! ”

## CHAPTER XXXI

### CAPTIVITY

**T**HEN he thrust the boy again into the corner. "Go to sleep," he said. "You don't get any breakfast in the morning."

It sweetened Pelham's thoughts, as in spite of his numb ankles he dropped into a doze, that Rip's breakfast would only be half a biscuit. Tim, thrust down by his side, threw an arm across his chum, and together the two boys slept.

In the morning they had no breakfast, nor even water, though in their sight Volger and Rip sat drinking from one of Nate's pitchers. The morning dragged by for the boys, though the two men went out and picked berries or watched the country roads for sight of pursuers. The boys were well tied to the wall,

and they made no attempt to escape, for, as Tim said, the longer they waited there, the surer they were to be discovered by their friends. Noon came and passed, and the afternoon advanced with slow steps.

Then while they sat wearily and uncomfortably in their corner, Rip and Volger suddenly rushed into the sugar-house. For a moment, seeing the excited faces of the two, Tim thought of murder, and Pelly prepared for resistance. But Rip's first words told them better.

"They'll be here in a minute," he said. "Johnny Bragin — I'll smash him, but where shall we hide these two?"

"The fire-box," said Volger, and threw it open. He seized Pelham like a sack of potatoes, Rip took Tim, and together the boys were roughly shoved into the box, feet first. The box was cold and ashy; it smelt of charcoal and smoke; and the grate-bars across which the boys lay were hard and sharp. The door was all but closed on them; and the

door of the ash-pit, below them, was opened an inch. The boys heard Rip's threatening voice close to their heads.

"Be quiet now!" ordered Rip, bending to the door. "Say a word when these fellers are here, and we'll smother you!"

Then there was silence, and next the sound of footsteps in the grass outside the house. A voice said, "Do you suppose they're here?" and then the door creaked. There came an "Oh!" of dismay.

Rip, standing in the middle of the sugar-house, faced the three searchers who had happened upon them. "Come in, boys," he said. "Come in you first of all, Johnny Bragin. What brings you all here?"

But the three, being acquainted with Rip, and having little courage, stopped outside, where they could instantly scatter in flight. "We — we didn't know you were here," said Johnny. "Where are the boys?"

"The boys?" asked Rip in surprise. "What boys?"

Then followed a colloquy easily imagined. The boys were Pelly and Tim; everyone thought that Rip had taken them away. But oh, no, Rip had never dreamed of such a thing. He had n't seen the boys since they met by the jail, and Waters was well known as a liar. The three at the door doubtfully accepted the statement. Still, they saw that the boys were not with Rip, — and guessed they 'd be moving on.

“But look here, Johnny,” said Rip, “just come in here a moment, won't you. I've got something I want to send to my father, and I'd like you to take it.” He pretended to be feeling in his pockets. “Come in. Don't be scared of me, man!”

Rip could not wholly disguise the disgust he felt at the fool who had betrayed him at the meeting, and Johnny could but remember that Rip had every reason to desire vengeance. Still, being always weak and unwilling to give offence, even though the whole world lay behind him into which to flee, Johnny ventured

a step into the house. Rip viewed him with satisfaction, and measured the distance with his eye. "That's right," he said.

Johnny was about to take another step, when a long arm could seize him and a historic beating would have been perpetrated. But a voice came seemingly from nowhere, muffled, and yet to be understood.

"Look out, Johnny! Run home and tell!"

"Lord save us!" gasped Johnny, looking up and down.

"Oh!" roared Rip, looking behind him.

"We're both here, in the fire-box," said the voice. "*Run, Johnny!*"

It came to Johnny's mind that this was the voice of Pelham. He saw Rip turn again savagely, he heard the voices of his comrades as they suddenly quitted the door. Johnny had all the weaknesses of a rabbit, but also its one strength, — the instinct for flight. As Rip leaped toward him he shrieked, turned, and sped away.

Rip, after one bound toward Johnny, saw

that pursuit was useless. Turning back, he rushed to the fire-box, pulled out both the boys, throwing them roughly upon the floor, and then stood over Pelham. "Now," he hissed through his teeth, "you 'll see if I don't dare —"

"See here," said Volger, "we've got just an hour to get away." He put a hand on Rip's arm.

"Let me alone!" cried Rip, shaking him off.

"There 'll be fifty men here," insisted Volger. "Let's get safe away, and then do what you please to him."

"Well," said Rip, reluctantly. He delivered one kick at Pelham before he turned away. "Three," counted Pelham softly to himself. "What 'll we do?" asked Rip.

"We've got to get food and water from Nate's," said Volger. "Come on, he's got flour in the house, anyway."

Once more Rip dragged the boys from the floor. He tied Tim on the log again, but

Pelham he lashed to the only chair, and tied his wrists together. Then drawing from his pocket a long knife, he suddenly flashed it before the boy's eyes. "Oh!" cried Tim in horror, but Pelham did not flinch. Though his lips grew white, he looked steadily into Rip's face.

"There!" said Rip, and jabbing the knife downward into the table, he left it standing there, quivering. "*That's* what will happen to you if you play any more tricks." With this parting threat, Rip and Volger hastened out of the sugar-house to rummage in Nate's stores.

The two boys looked at each other, and both drew long breaths. "Whew!" said Pelly. "It's good to have them out of sight, is n't it?" They listened to the sound of Rip and Volger pushing through the bushes until they could be heard no longer. Then Pelham's gaze was suddenly fixed upon the knife in front of him.

"Gravy!" he cried.

“What is it?” asked Tim.

“Gravy!” cried Pelham again, — his favorite exclamation, which with him always had a meaning. He stared again at the knife, and then at his hands. “What is it?” demanded Tim once more.

“Tim,” asked Pelham, “do you remember the place in the ‘Heroes of Iceland,’ where Njal’s sons are prisoners of the Earl, and are to be killed at daylight?”

“No,” said Tim.

“‘And when all men slept save Njal’s sons,’” quoted Pelham, “‘Grim saw an axe lying edge up, and crawled thither, and cut the bowstring which bound him, but still he got great wounds on his arms.’” And all the time Pelham was gazing at Rip’s knife.

“Oh, Pelham,” cried Tim, “you must n’t!”

“Must n’t I?” asked Pelham, and then he began to hitch his chair toward the table, while Tim watched. Little by little, inch by inch, Pelham neared the table, and at last could raise his arms to try to cut the cord that tied

his wrist. Carefully — carefully — then suddenly Tim saw the blood.

“Oh, Pelly!” he cried.

“It’s nothing,” answered Pelham, firmly, and went on sawing at the cord. Twice more the marline slipped by the knife, and twice more he cut his wrist, but then at last the cord parted. Raising his arms, Pelham quickly shook them free of the wrappings, seized the knife from the table, and cut the lashings that held him to the chair. “Now!” he said, and started toward Tim.

But at the first step he fell upon the floor, — his numb legs would not carry him. “Oh!” he groaned in disgust, and held the knife out. “Can you cut yourself loose?” Tim, leaning forward, was just able to reach the knife. Taking it, he quickly freed himself.

And then, for seconds that seemed minutes, and minutes that seemed hours, the two boys rubbed their ankles and legs, to bring the blood to the useless muscles. Rip, thought

Pelham furiously, had tied them all too well, and presently he would be coming back. And at that very moment he heard the snapping of bushes.

Pelham leaped to his feet and hobbled to the door. "I see their hats," he whispered, looking out. "They'll be here in a moment." He was testing his legs as he spoke, and every instant felt new strength. "Can you run, Tim?"

"Yes," answered Tim, valiantly. He rose from the log, took one feeble step toward the door, and fell helplessly. Pelham leaped to him and tried to help him up.

"No," said Tim, looking at his chum. "I need a few minutes more. But you're all right, Pelly. Run!"

"I guess so!" answered Pelham, with all a boy's contempt. "I think I see myself!" He went to the door and kicked aside the prop that held it open. Just coming, in full view, were Rip and Volger, and Pelham waved his hand to them. Then he swung the door to in

haste, and dropped the wooden bars into place just as Rip flung himself against the door.

Rip raged at the door till he found that it would not yield. Then he sprang upon a pile of brush which was under the single window of the cabin. He broke the window and thrust in his head. Right under his nose Pelham held the point of his own knife.

"Honest and true, I'll use it, Rip," said Pelly.

The boy's face was pale, but there was no mistaking the courage in his eyes. Rip felt the prick of the point, and drew back.

"Better leave 'em, and come along," said Volger, while Rip stood glaring at the ground again, looking for some weapon against the boys.

"Leave 'em?" shouted Rip in fury. He dragged the pile of brush in front of the door, stooped before it, and drew out a match.

"What are you about?" cried Volger.

"I'm burnin' the door down," answered Rip. He struck the match, put it to the

brush, and in an instant the dry pile was crackling. "Now," said Rip, rising. "The door and window are both on this side. They can't get away."

Apparently there was no attempt to get away. The brush blazed up, the door caught, the wood around the door was burning, and still there was no sign, and no sound, from the boys. At last Volger, alarmed, called to them to climb out the window. There was no answer.

Then Volger, shaking with fear, turned to Rip. "You — you 've killed them!"

"Aw, shut up," answered Rip, though his own face was yellow. "They'll come climbing out the window soon enough!"

Volger turned and looked, and there, across the window from inside, swept a sheet of flame. Another followed, the frame of the window caught, and then, suddenly, the door fell in. The whole interior of the sugar-house was seething with fire.

"Boys! Boys!" shrieked Volger.

There was no answer. There could be no answer. With starting eyes Volger looked at Rip, and saw in his face the reflection of his own horror. Then, with one impulse, the two rushed away from that terrible place.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE BITERS BIT

**T**HERE had come a temporary stop to the search for the lost boys, and before starting out a second time many of the searchers were in the town. Mr. Dodd, the director of it all, had been telephoning and telegraphing since early morning. Just now he had finished sending a long telegram to the chief of police of the city of New York, describing Volger, saying that his name was possibly Adams, and asking whether, as the newspaper clippings said, he was wanted in New York for any crimes. At the same time Mr. Dodd demanded an answer in regard to Waters. He had just left the telegraph office when he saw an excited crowd coming to meet him, and heard the shouts of, "They're at Nate's sugar-house!"

Then Johnny Bragin was shoved forward, and told his story in one breathless burst. Mr. Dodd, while he listened, planned, and noted with satisfaction that besides Cudahy, Nate, and Waters, there were others there on whom he could depend.

“We’ll go there at once,” said Mr. Dodd, when Johnny had finished, “and we’ll all go together. Then, if they’re gone, we’ll spread out and search the woods. Where’s my son Bob?”

“He’s not come back yet,” was the answer.

“He’ll be furious at missing it,” Mr. Dodd said, “but we can’t help that. Come on, now.”

Off they started together, forty men and boys,—and yet the boys, who should have gone first, lingered. Then it was that Arthur, and Lawrence, and Biff Spotts, who had so manfully worked at the mill throughout the strike, though ostracised by their former fellows, received at last their reward. They were tired, all of them, with their mill-work, they had been searching for hours, and though they

were bound to follow the men to Nate's, they had no strength to go ranging on ahead. Let the workingmen's sons do that, they thought, as they fell in behind the men, and began to trudge along.

But the workingmen's sons lingered behind, drew nearer and nearer, and finally were walking side by side with them. On one side of the road were Arthur, and Lawrence, and Biff, who should have had Tim and Pelly to make their number complete; and on the other side were Duck Lanigan, and Curly, and Hop the son of Cudahy, and all those others with whom so many games had been played, and so many good times enjoyed. But no word was yet spoken, for Arthur, the leader of his side, would not speak, and no one of the others quite knew how to break the ice.

But at length Duck, like a manful Irishman, made the effort. The men's union had hauled down its colors, and acknowledged itself wrong. If the men had been wrong, so had been the boys, and that sad truth must

be spoken. Duck gulped once, gulped twice, and then went across the road to the side of Arthur, who was walking along, looking straight ahead of him, yet longing for the reconciliation.

Duck gulped for the third time, and then spoke. "Say, Arthur," he said, "our union's busted up."

"It is?" asked Arthur, quickly, and turned on Duck that friendly eye which all the boys knew and liked so well.

"Yes," answered Duck, taking more courage. "We've thrown away our badges. And — and you don't mind us walkin' with you, do you?"

"Mind? I'm glad!" cried Arthur, and then the hands met which never should have been separated. Immediately Curly skipped across the road to Lawrence's side, and Hop to Biff's. The smaller boys closed up, and surrounded the greater, and that happy babel of voices arose which their elders knew so well.

Mr. Dodd looked back from among the group of silent, hurrying men. "I'm glad, Cudahy," he said to the man at his side, "to hear our sons at it again."

Cudahy nodded. "It's throubled me a lot, sir. But now everything will go right."

Nate led the party by the shortest cut to his place. The house was quiet, although some windows had been broken. Nate put in his head, called once the name of each boy, and told the others to go on up the hill, again putting himself at their head. "Any damage done to the house?" asked Mr. Dodd.

"Rummaged," answered Nate, briefly. "I — there's smoke!" He pointed ahead.

"They are cooking," said Mr. Dodd.

"More than cooking," replied Nate. "That's the sugar-house itself. Hurry!"

And they hurried, only to find the smoking ruins of the house. There stood the old stone chimney, and there still were the brick fire-box and its iron skimming-pans, but they were in the midst of smouldering embers.

“Durn ’em!” said Nate.

“Never mind the house. Where have they gone?” questioned Mr. Dodd, and Nate at once laid aside his own troubles.

“Here is the path,” he said, and showed it leading off into the bushes. They followed it a little way, until Nate declared that it had been trodden within an hour. Then they hastened along it, Nate in the lead. But after a few minutes he stepped aside into the bushes, and letting most of the others pass him, beckoned to Mr. Dodd, Waters, Cudahy, and Mr. Blair, to remain by his side. Arthur stopped also, and the rest of the boys checked their pursuit, to watch and listen. Nate turned back toward the sugar-house.

“Why is this?” asked Mr. Dodd.

“Them two raskils went alone,” answered Nate. “The path is muddy in places, and I saw their tracks. There were no boys’ feet, and the men were goin’ too fast to be carryin’ ’em.”

“Then what of the boys?” demanded Mr. Dodd.

Nate, with closed lips, pointed toward the sugar-house, and the father's face grew white.

Soon they stood again at the ruins, and Mr. Dodd gazed among the little flames. Was it possible that there were the bones of his little lad, that some of his dearest hopes must lie there buried? Waters pressed close to his side, and with colorless lips tried to ask a question. But he could not speak, and Mr. Dodd could only press his hand.

“This way!” called Nate, suddenly.

They hastened to his side, and there, on the opposite side of the house, Nate showed a trail leading away in the bushes. “May have been a dog, a cow, anything,” said Nate. “But let's follow it up.”

Through the thicket they followed it, through grass, to a pine grove. There it was lost, and Mr. Dodd looked helpless. But, “Come with me,” said Nate, and led them. “I guess where —” He said no more, leading the way with great strides.

They came at last to the cave, which, with

its cleft rock and giant pine, loomed suddenly amid the trees. No footprints showed on the pine needles, but Nate went straight to the entrance, and the others followed him silently. He stooped and called into the black hole.

“Are you in there?”

They listened. They heard a voice,—a thin, a tired, a *pale* voice, but it was courageous still. “I would n’t come in if I were you, Rip,” it said. “I told you I’d use the knife.”

“Pelly!” they shouted with happiness. “Pelly!”

And from that place of refuge they drew the two boys.

When, somewhat rested, having had food and water, the two boys were able to talk, they told the story by bits. The biscuits and the fire-box, Johnny Bragin’s coming, and Rip’s knife, Pelham’s cut wrists, and the fire,—it all came out slowly.

“But how did yez get out?” asked Cudahy.

“It was Tim’s idea,” said Pelham. “We’d been in the fire-box once, you know. He said

he thought we could get through it up the chimney. And it was an awful big opening, so we did, and slipped down on the other side of the house."

"Gad!" exclaimed Nate in the silence. "I've been meanin' to modernize that fire-box; it's eighty year old. If I'd put in a damper to save wood, Pelly, you could never have saved your life."

"Let's get the boys home," said Mr. Dodd. "Go and get your buckboard, Nate. A dollar to the boy that brings the news to Mrs. Dodd."

Duck darted away, and no one tried to beat him, for of the village boys he was the fastest runner. The buckboard was brought, and Tim and Pelham, in state, were at last carefully brought down to the highroad. There, as they journeyed toward town, two vehicles overtook them.

The first was a truck, drawn by eight horses, and carrying a vast piece of mechanism which at once excited the interest of the

workmen. Mr. Dodd nodded at the driver as it passed, and Cudahy presently, after whispering with his mates, came and questioned his employer.

“Is that the water-wheel that works sideways?” he asked.

“That is the turbine,” answered Mr. Dodd. “If you are ready for work next Monday, your work will be ready for you.”

“Hivin be praised!” ejaculated Cudahy, piously, and there were many smiles among the workmen as they trudged onward.

Next overtook them a farmer’s wagon, which rattled smartly up, the driver hallooing. “Why, it’s Bob!” said Mr. Dodd.

“Have you got them?” asked Bob.

“We have. You missed it,” answered his father.

From the tall wagon Bob beamed down. “I’m not so sure,” he said.

“What!” roared Cudahy. “Did ye meet thim raskils?”

“I did,” said Bob.

“Did ye lay hand on thim?” demanded Cudahy.

“I did,” answered Bob.

“Where are they, then?” called twenty voices.

“Look in the wagon,” Bob said.

A dozen mounted at once upon the wheels, the shafts, and even leaped upon the body of the wagon. There within lay two forms, tied neck and neck, heel and heel. Rip and Volger glared out of changed features, but said nothing.

“Black eyes!” cried Cudahy, with delight. “Hi, how their faces is puffed up! Mr. Bob, who was with ye?”

“I was alone,” Bob said.

“Man, man, what did ye do to them?” asked Cudahy.

“I laid hands on them,” answered Bob. No further description of the capture would he ever give, but any reference to it always seemed to start in him the happiest train of thought.

Then the procession went on, — a strange one, — until at length it reached the town, and with shouts and cheers of triumph called all inhabitants into the street. There was a welcome to Pelham from his mother; and another, grim, yet very hearty, was extended to Rip and Volger by the constables.

Since Tim was put upon the buckboard Waters had walked by his side, holding his hand, in deep and silent content. Now the constable approached Waters and laid a hand on his shoulder.

“You ’ve helped us well, Mr. Waters,” said the constable, “and you ’re a *man*. But I ’ll have to ask you to come with me.”

Waters stooped and kissed Tim, then looked at Mrs. Dodd.

“I ’ll take care of him!” she cried. “Be sure of that.”

“Thank ye, ma’am,” said Waters, humbly. He turned to the constable. “I ’m ready,” he said.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### UNDERSTANDINGS

FOR the rest of that day there was little more work done in the town except by Mr. Dodd. He had his turbine to attend to, messages to send, and letters to write. But after seeing that the mechanics were at work setting the turbine in place, and having done all else that he could, in much impatience he at last settled himself at his telephone desk, and called up by long distance the New York chief of police. There were delays, but at last he heard from the receiver a faint and distant voice.

“Is that the chief of police?” asked Mr. Dodd.

“It is,” was the answer.

“I have been writing and telegraphing you,” said Mr. Dodd, “about a man named

Waterman, accused of murder in your city eleven years ago. Also about a man named Volger who is, I think, called Foxy Adams."

"Now you're talking," said the tiny voice. "A nice tangle you've given us to unravel."

"I don't hear you plainly," said Mr. Dodd, puzzled. "Why have n't I heard from you before?"

"The message went to the wrong office."

"Well," asked Mr. Dodd, "are you going to send for Waterman?"

"No."

"No?" cried Mr. Dodd. "Don't you want him?"

"Don't want him," tinkled the thin voice. "Turn him loose." There followed what appeared to be an explanation, of which Mr. Dodd could catch nothing whatever. At length he gave it up.

"But Volger?" he asked. "Adams, if that's his name. Shall we hold him?"

"Hold him tight," trickled the reply. "We'll send the papers as soon as we can."

“And you don’t want Waterman?” asked Mr. Dodd again.

“Don’t you understand?” he heard faintly, but he was sure it came distinctly. “Adams was the man Waterman killed.”

“What?” cried Mr. Dodd.

The answer was indistinct.

“Will you telegraph me that there is no charge against Waters?” he asked. Again he could not distinguish the reply. “Speak plainer!” he directed.

But the little singing in the wire had ceased. “They’ve cut me off,” he thought, and rang for central. “You’ve cut me off,” he complained.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Dodd,” said the girl over the wire. “It’s on one of the cross-country lines. They’re always working badly. I’ll try again.” But after much effort she at last learned that the chief of police had left his office. His mind full of what he had heard, or what he thought he had heard, Mr. Dodd hurried to the jail.

There he asked to see Waters, and was at once admitted to the office of the jail, where Waters was brought to him. "This is very good of you, sir," said the prisoner.

"Waters," said Mr. Dodd, "I have some information which I want you to help me piece out. I am going to ask you some questions which you must answer to the best of your ability. — This accusation against you. Describe the man you acknowledge killing, and the struggle."

"There was no struggle, sir," said Waters. "The man was a newcomer at the mill; he had worked in our room but two days, and I'd scarcely come face to face with him but once or twice. But one day, just after the noon hour, as we were going to our places, I heard him say all women were bad. I stopped short and said to him, 'Any man that says that is bad himself.'"

"Well?" asked Mr. Dodd, as Waters paused.

"He jumped at me," said Waters, "with

a long hammer he had in his hand. I backed against a machine, sir, found I could n't get away, and as he aimed a blow at me which would have finished me, I snatched a tool from the machine bench and let him have it. He went down, sir, like an ox."

"Tell me," said Mr. Dodd, "exactly where you struck him."

"Just above the ear, sir," answered Waters. "It laid his cheek open down to the chin."

Mr. Dodd walked once up and down the room, then came and stood in front of Waters. "Then," he said, "a blow like that would make a scar on a man's forehead and chin, say from above the ear to the point of the jaw." He passed his hand along his own face to show the line.

Waters started as the idea came to him. "Mr. Dodd, the man would have to recover to have a scar!"

"Tell me," said Mr. Dodd, "what was the man's name?"

"Adams," answered Waters.

“And was he bearded?”

“He was, sir?”

Mr. Dodd paused. He was satisfied now that he had heard aright over the telephone, that Volger was the man Waters was supposed to have killed, and that Waters had not recognized him on account of their short acquaintance, the absence of beard, and the very scar which Waters himself had made. But he wished to be positive, and therefore called the jailer. “Will you bring Volger here?” he asked.

Volger was brought. He had been badly bruised by Bob, and in the woods his clothes had been torn; he looked shabby, tired, and in very bad repair. “Volger,” said Mr. Dodd, “you’ve had a hard time.”

“Yes, sir,” agreed the man, respectfully. He was not such as Rip, who, like a trapped wolf, was furious and sullen by terms.

“Volger,” said Mr. Dodd again, “will you tell me where you first met Waters?”

“Never before I came to your mill, sir,” answered Volger, quickly.

“Then how,” asked Mr. Dodd, “did you know that his name was Waterman?”

“Why — why —,” stammered the man.

Mr. Dodd looked at him with a smile. “You were not very *foxy*,” he said, emphasizing the word.

Volger started and looked at Mr. Dodd in fear. At the same moment Waters leaped from his seat. “Foxy Adams!” he cried. “That was the name. — Are you the man?” he demanded, approaching Volger.

“You may as well acknowledge it,” said Mr. Dodd.

“I am,” mumbled Volger.

Waters clasped his hands together. “Thank God!” he said, as now he learned that he had not killed. Mr. Dodd called the jailer and had Volger removed.

“And — and I’m free to go, sir?” asked Waters. “To go to Tim?”

“You can go as soon as I hear officially

from the New York chief of police," said Mr. Dodd, "and that won't be long. You need n't go back to your cell, at any rate. You are lucky, Waters. Only — if you had never started home that day!"

"Don't speak of it, sir," cried Waters. "Eleven years I've carried this secret with me. It's been a heavy burden."

Now the jailer entered again. "Old McCook's outside, Mr. Dodd," he said. "He claims his son robbed him. Here," and he showed Mr. Dodd a handkerchief full of money and odds and ends, "here's what I took from the young fellow. Old McCook wants his things back without making a fuss, but how are we to know what is his?"

"The jewelry surely is n't Rip's," said Mr. Dodd. "Here is a very fine old piece," and he took from the handkerchief a brooch. "This is —"

But Waters snatched it from him. "That brooch!" cried the dyer. "That was my mother's! How did it come here? I gave it

to my wife." He looked at it eagerly, as if trying to read its secret.

"If McCook owns it —" began Mr. Dodd.

"McCook?" cried Waters. — "Excuse me, Mr. Dodd. I have n't any manners. But will you call him in?"

McCook was called in, and stood, glancing uneasily from Mr. Dodd to Waters. Mr. Dodd took the brooch. "Is this yours?" asked he.

"It is, sir," replied McCook, eagerly, holding out his hand.

"How did you get it?" demanded Waters.

"It was my wife's," answered McCook.

"It was *my* wife's," cried Waters. "McCook, answer me this. Was the brooch the boy's — Tim's?"

Into McCook's face came his old look of spite. "No," he said. "My wife bought it at a pawnshop."

"Keep the brooch, keep it, Mr. Dodd," begged Waters, with shaking hands. "This must be looked into. Biddy may know."

They did not notice that McCook started. Biddy did know. But at that moment came into the room Pelham and Tim, through the open door. Tim went straight to Waters.

“What is it?” he asked, as Waters stood still, looking at him eagerly, but making no move to meet him. “Why do you look at me so?”

“Oh, my lad, my lad,” whispered Waters, drawing him close, “I have such a new hope of thee!”

Pelham had marched up to his father. “A telegram came for you,” he said, holding it out. “I thought you might want it, and so I brought it. And Tim wanted to see Mr. Waters.”

Mr. Dodd opened the telegram, read it to himself, and exclaimed. “What is it, sir?” asked Waters, quick to anticipate harm.

Mr. Dodd looked at him, looked at him strangely. “It’s good news,” he said. “Can you bear it, Waters?”

Waters passed his arm around Tim. “I can bear anything, sir,” he said.

Mr. Dodd consulted the telegram. "It is from the chief of police," he said. "I asked him to telegraph, so that there should be no mistake, but he tells me what I had not supposed. It reads: 'No charge against Waterman. Hold Adams and will send papers and men for him. One mistake in your letter. Waterman's son not dead. Adopted by woman named McCook!'"

There was a long silence. Tim, his face pale, looked up at the man who held him. The boy said nothing, but his eyes asked the question.

Suddenly Waters dropped to his knees, clasped the boy close, and hid his face upon his shoulder. "My son!" he cried brokenly.

McCook slipped out. At a gesture from Mr. Dodd, the jailer tiptoed away. Then Mr. Dodd took Pelham by the arm. "Come away," he whispered; and going out, they closed the door behind them.

\* \* \* \* \*

A few more words and our story is finished. The strike was over, and the men went back to work. Volger was sent for from New York, and in due course went to prison. The union did not dissolve, but its next president was Waters, now called Waterman, a man held in much honor, not only by his employer, but also by his mates.

As for Rip McCook, he served a term in the reformatory. And his father left the town, being most unpopular. Bridget, whose home was thus destroyed, promptly conveyed herself to a place where for the first time she was appreciated, and thereafter kept house for Waterman and his son Tim.

The Dodd prosperity continued. Pelham, — but no one will expect a lad of his spirit not to get into more trouble, and it is impossible to dispose of his adventures here.

And Tim? His misfortune was that he must go to school. He had tasted the delights of work, of a career which he knew himself able to fill. Waters knew it also,

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and Nate acknowledged it. "He's got the *sense*," they agreed. But for all that he must go to school. "No son of mine," said Waters, proud of the word, — "no son of mine shall remain a day laborer. The business is growing here. Go to school. Go to the Institute of Technology. Then come back, and let me and Nate tell you all we know. You will be more than either of us then."

And Tim is doing what his father said.

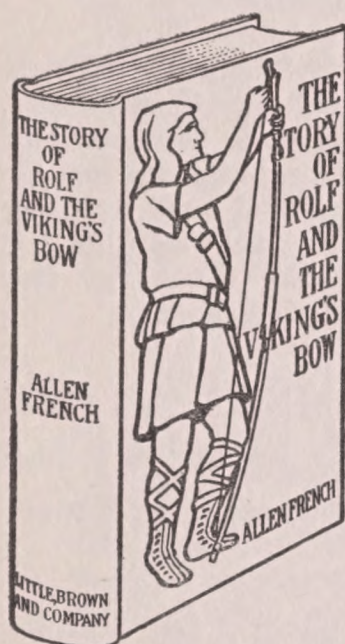


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